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A VIEW of HUMAN LIFE,  
 IN A SERIES OF  
 S E R M O N S  
 O N T H E

Following Subjects :

V I Z.

The Duty of Parents to their Children.	Providence, or our Obligations to God our Preserver and Benefactor.
The Mortality of Children considered and improved.	The Goodness of God in former Life, a Ground of Encouragement in Old Age.
The Possibility of a Young Man preserving his Virtue.	The Returns due to God for all his Benefits.
The Young Man must take Heed to his Way.	The Fear of Death conquerable.
Personal Care without a Principle of Piety insufficient.	How to conquer the Fear of Death.
The Word of God the Young Man's Guide.	The great Duty of drawing near to God considered and explained.
Creation, or our Obligations to God our Maker.	The Happiness of drawing near to God.
	The gradual Workings and Product of Afflictions.

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By SAMUEL EATON, D. D.

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For the USE of FAMILIES.

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PUBLISHED at the REQUEST of many of the Author's Friends.

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L O N D O N :

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THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

IN THE YEAR 1660

BY JOHN DEWEE

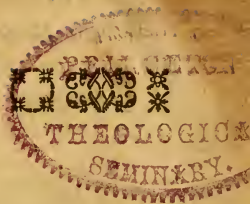
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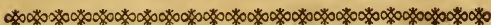
ROYAL SOCIETY

OF LONDON





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P. 359, 384.



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# S E R M O N I.

## The DUTY of PARENTS to their CHILDREN.



PROV. xxii. 6.

*Train up a Child in the Way he should go;  
and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

AMONGST the many useful  
A Directions for Preaching, which  
the great Apostle of the Gentiles  
gave to his Son *Timothy*, this I  
think is the best and most comprehensive,  
*Study to shew thyself approved unto God — a*  
*Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, right-*  
*ly dividing the Word of Truth.* Here the  
Art of useful Preaching is comprised. It is  
the *Word of Truth*, that we must preach —  
in a *Manner*, that needeth not to be ashamed  
— and to render it useful, it must be *rightly*  
B *divided*

SERMON  
I.

2 Tim. ii.  
15.

SERMON  
I.

*divided*, as our Divine Teacher explains it, *giving to every one their proper Portion in due Season*. The Word of Truth must be divided and proportioned according to the different Capacities, Circumstances, and Characters of our Hearers ; for that which is proper Food for one, is not so for another. See *Heb. v. 12, 13, 14.*

THE Scriptures divide all Mankind, according to their Characters, into two different Ranks —— the RIGHTEOUS and the WICKED ; into which they will be separated in the Day of Judgment. Here should great Care be took, in dividing the Word of Truth aright, that each may have his *proper Portion*. The *Wicked* must be called to *convert* and become *New Men*, without which they have neither Lot nor Portion with the Righteous : But the *Righteous*, instead of *reverting*, and turning back, must be exhorted to *hold on their Way*, and to *grow stronger and stronger*. Without a careful Attention to this Division, as God declared by his Prophet, *We shall make the Heart of the Righteous sad ; and strengthen the Hands of the Wicked, that he should not return from his wicked Way, by promising him Life — yea we shall slay the Souls,*

*Parents to their Children.*

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SERMON  
I.

*Souls, that should not die, and save the Souls alive, that should not live.*

BUT there is another Division made by the God of Providence, arising from the different Circumstances and Relations in Life, in which we are placed, as Rich and Poor — High and Low — Husbands and Wives — Parents and Children — Masters and Servants. To each of these the *Word of Truth* should be divided aright.

THERE is likewise a *third* and prior Division, made by the Author of Nature, arising from the several States we pass through from Infancy to Old Age; each of which require a different Division of the *Word of Truth*. This Division I purpose to make the Rule of a Series of Discourses adapted to your several Ages, and Circumstances in Life; and have chose this for my first Subject, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

PERMIT me here a Citation from a late serious Writer, which will be a proper Introduction to my Design, and shew the Plan which I propose. “The Life of Man, as  
“*he observes, is divided into five different*

B 2

“Periods,

“ Periods. We do not come into the World  
 “ in our full Stature and Capacity, and die  
 “ in the same State ; but pass through differ-  
 “ ent Stages, as Infancy, Childhood, Youth,  
 “ Manhood, and Old Age. — How to fix  
 “ the precise Limits of these several Periods  
 “ may not be so easy ; nor is it of much Con-  
 “ sequence. *Infancy* is the first and shortest  
 “ Stage of Life — we may allow to it four  
 “ or five Years. *Childhood* may be extended  
 “ to about *twelve* Years. — *Youth* reaches  
 “ from thence to about *twenty*. — And *Man-*  
 “ *hood* to the Time, when the Strength and  
 “ Vigour of Nature begins to be impaired.  
 “ — From thence *Old Age* creeps on us.”

THESE are the *five* distinct Periods, or Stages of Human Life, in each of which Man is a quite different Being from what he was in the former Parts, — not only in Respect of the Form, Features, and Powers of his Body ; but likewise in the Capacities, Desires, and Endowments of his Mind.

INFANCY is the *first* and shortest Stage ; to which we may allow *three, four, or five* Years, more or less, according as Reason begins to dawn, and intelligent Capacities,  
 and

and active Powers discover themselves. — Here *Infancy* ends, and *Childhood* begins.

THIS first Stage of *Infancy* I would have made the Subject of my first Discourse ; but really I can find no Text for it, nor does it furnish out Subject Matter. In this State, the MAN can scarcely be looked upon as *born* ; though the Infant-Creature is brought into the World. The Infant is neither a Reasonable Being, nor a Free Agent ; and consequently is no Subject of Religion ; being incapable of receiving Instruction, and of doing either Good or Evil ; for in Proportion as that Capacity begins, *Infancy* ends. In this State the Infant can do nothing for itself, and all the Parents can do for it, is to devote it seriously to God, take care of, and pray for the Preservation of it's tender Life, and stand prepared for training it up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, as soon as it becomes capable of it. And let not the present Incapacity of your Infant-Offspring abate your tenderest parental Regards. To borrow the Prophet's Language, *Destroy it not, for a Blessing is in it.* A precious, rational, immortal Soul, capable of



rising to be a Blessing here ; and of being blessed and happy for ever.

CHILDHOOD is the next State that succeeds ; when the little Creature has learned to walk and speak. — When the Intellectual and Rational Faculties begin to dawn, and the young Mind first becomes capable of Moral Action and of receiving Discipline and Instruction — of distinguishing in some Measure betwixt Good and Evil ; and consequently of forming it's own Conduct, and being accountable for it. Now it first becomes a Rational Being, and capable of becoming a Religious Being. At the time of it's *natural* Birth, it was a Creature ; but now is the time it should become a Child of God. — Be *born again* — *barn from above*, and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The natural Birth and Life commenced together : So should the *rational and spiritual Life* — and the one endure as long as the other. Now is the fittest and most proper Time ; and the Means most proper and necessary for this greatest and best End, we are directed to in my text ; which now comes under Consideration, *Train up a Child in the way*



*way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

My Text consists of two Parts.

- I. A COMMAND, and general Direction given to Parents, and to all those to whom the Care and Education of Children is committed, during this State of Minority, and that is, to *Train them up in the Way, in which they should go.*
- II. A MOST encouraging Promise, *When they are old, they will not depart from it.*

IN explaining and considering this Command and Direction I must not attempt a Treatise upon Education; but refer you to your own Knowledge, and to the Choice of Books, which you may meet with upon this Subject.

THE general Direction given in my Text, is this, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go.* The Child is not to be left to himself — nor is he only to be told and taught, but he is to be TRAINED, watched, conducted, guided, disciplined and formed. His Infant-

Mind is now to be nursed and tended as carefully, as his Infant-Body was before. The Nature and Condition of our Children calls for this ; and the Fruit of it will richly reward all our Care, and all our Labour. If left to themselves in such a World as ours, much Evil may be counted upon ; but little Wisdom or Goodness can be expected from them, during these Years, from *three* to *twelve*. Their childish young Minds are so perfectly ignorant and unexperienced, and their Capacities so weak, that in this State of *non-age* they are not Beings fit to chuse their own Ways ; nor can we expect, that they should find out the Principles of Wisdom and the Rules of Prudence : — though much may and ought to be done for them in this Morning, this Spring, and Seed-Time of Life ; and what is done or neglected now, may prove of greater Consequence both to Soul and Body, for Time and Eternity, than any Thing that can be done afterwards.

It is asked by the Psalmist, *Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his Way?* And the Answer is given, *By taking heed thereto according to God's Word.* Should it be asked in like

like Manner, *Wherewith shall a Child cleanse his Way?* The Question would be improper, and the Answer more so, as it would imply the Expectation of a natural Impossibility. If a *Child* cleanse his Way, it must be by the Care and Help of the Parent or Guardian, *taking Heed thereto according to God's Word.* The Child is to be *trained*, not left to itself, but guided, instructed, taught, and led as by the Hand — in which case the young Creature will be found teachable and tractable; but is by no Means fit to take the Lead, or to be left to itself. By this Means, it both can and will readily concur, and whilst much is done for it in a proper Way, it will be enabled to do much for itself; though without such Assistance, what can be expected, but that *Childhood and Youth will both be Vanity?* Whom, says the Prophet, *shall he teach Knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand Doctrine?* *Them that are weaned from the Milk, and drawn from the Breast* (directing to begin as early as possible) *for Precept must be upon Precept, Line upon-Line, Line upon Line, here a little and there a little.* And in Order to shew it is not enough to give Directions and Commands

Isa. xxviii.  
9. 10.

SERMON

I.

Isa. xxviii.

13.

mands to these young Minds, but they must be continued and accompanied with daily Watchfulness and tender Tuition, it is repeated, — *The Word of the Lord must be to them Precept upon Precept, Line upon Line, Line upon Line, here a little and there a little.* See likewise *Deut. vi. 7.*

By such constant and tender Aid, there is no saying what Attainments the Child is capable of, in this Morning of Life. The Knowledge, the Fear, and the Love of God, which is the *Beginning of Wisdom* and Happiness, may be instilled and implanted, together with virtuous Principles and pious Dispositions, and that Command, Subjecti-  
on, and Modesty of Temper, which is the Foundation of all Virtue, and recommends to growing Favour both with God and Man. All this is attainable in Childhood, in Conjunction with the Rudiments of that Learning, and of those Arts, which are the best Preparatives for a Life of Usefulness and Comfort in this World.

BUT on the contrary, if the Child be neglected and left to itself, which we know is now too commonly the Case, What is to be expected? Nothing, but that the Child remain  
main

main ignorant, grow idle, trifling, and careless — averse to every Thing that is wise and good — and in Time, become peevish, stubborn, obstinate, and untractable — fond of bad Company and idle Companions, with whom it has been allowed to associate, whose profane Language and evil Manners it has learned, all which soon renders it fit only for Destruction. Now when this is the Case, as it is too frequently, the poor miserable Child is not only blamed, chastised, and perhaps hated; but God and Nature are both blasphemed, whilst the Sin and Guilt lie at the Parents Door. In the Day, the great and awful Day of Judgment, Parents may count upon receiving either the Reward due to the Wisdom and Virtue of their Offspring, during their Childhood; or the Reproach due to their early Vices, which sprung from the Parents neglect of their most important Duty and Trust. The Vices of such Children are their Unhappiness, but they are the Fruit of their Parents great Sin. — Their Children shall die in their Iniquity; but their *Blood will be required at their Parents Hands*. These awful Thoughts should

should awaken a serious Attention to the two Things, which remain to be considered.

I. WHAT may farther be learned from the general Direction in my Text.

II. THE Enforcement contained in it.

I. PARENTS and Tutors are here directed to *Train up a Child in the Way he should go*. How instructive is this general and short Direction! And how different from the common Method of Education! Children are too often taught and trained up in a Variety of Tempers and Practices, which must afterwards be renounced as wrong, or laid aside as useless. Thus is the precious Morning of Life, and often the whole of Life, lost and trifled away, never to be retrieved. But Wisdom's Advice is this, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go*, and should persist in, if he live to be old. — Set him forward in the Journey of Life — accompany and direct him till he has learnt the Road, and then tell him, *This is the Way, walk in it*.

IN further opening this Direction, I shall mention nothing but what is properly contained



tained in it; and what it concerns every Parent and Tutor to put in Practice, and every Child to learn and submit to. Know then, that there is a *Way* and Course of Life, into which ALL should be entered, as soon as possible; and from which no one should ever depart. You may know it from the Particulars I am going to mention.

THE *first* Remark in this Book of *Proverbs*, intended to give Subtilty to the Simple, and to the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion, is this, *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Knowledge*. This first Principle of all true Wisdom and Goodness, I judge, is nearly the first, that the Child is capable of being taught, and having impressed upon it's Mind. This should be taught in so serious, so amiable, and endearing a Manner, that the Child may *like to retain God in his Knowledge* — considering God as his Heavenly Father — his best Friend — his Maker, Preserver, and constant Benefactor. In this pleasing Sense of *Deity*, the Child is to be trained up; not only by Instructions, and Directions for Prayer and Praise; but by a daily Attendance upon such Family-Devotion as is due to God — and the frequent

Prov. i. 7.

quent hearing of Prayer and Praise, offered up to God on it's own Account.

NEXT to God, Children are to be trained up in a Veneration for their Parents and Guardians; without which no proper Obedience and Subjection can be expected. If Children do not first learn to shew *Piety at Home, by requiting and obeying their Parents*, it is not to be expected, that they should learn proper Subjection to either God or Man. Hence the Command, *Children obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right.* — *Honour thy Father and Mother, which is the first Commandment with Promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the Earth.* — It follows, *And ye Fathers provoke not your Children to wrath; but bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.*

CONSEQUENT upon this, Children should be trained up by Precept and Example, in a careful Abstinence from all Appearance of Evil, in Word or Action, and in the Cultivation of all those virtuous Tempers and Practices, which are recommended in the Religion of Jesus Christ: Such as Humility, Modesty, Humanity, Benevolence, Mercy,

Eph. vi.  
1, 2, 3.

Ver. 4.

Compassion, Meekness, Forbearance, Forgiveness. — All these and the like, they should be taught to shew forth in their Behaviour towards the Family, and to all with whom they have to do. — They should love as *Brethren* and Sisters, *be pitiful, be courteous*. As they are taught to behave in this little Society whilst Children, so they are likely to behave afterwards in the World.

AND with Respect to Themselves, they should be trained to Diligence, Moderation, Sobriety, Temperance, Self-denial, Contentedness with their Lot, Thankfulness for every Allowance and Favour, a Desire to learn and improve Honesty and Sincerity. And above all, in an inviolable Regard to TRUTH, and dread of a LIE. I do not say that Children should be *taught* a Love of Truth, but trained and held to it; for it is evidently *natural* to them. It is true to a Proverb, that *Children tell Truth*. A Lie is never invented at first, but fled to at second-hand to cover some other Fault. Now as Truth is sacred above every Thing, and the Foundation of all Righteousness and Virtue — and as Lies are fled to as a Refuge and Covering for all Sins; so I think the chief Art and

Secret

Secret in the Government of Children is this, that excepting Obstinacy and Perseverance in what is wrong, the Faults of Children, after proper Advice, Reproof, and Rebuke, should all pass unpunished, excepting this one Sin of Lying and Prevarication. — But this should never pass off without severe Punishment. Let the Child know this, and when he may hope for Pardon, he will ingenuously confess his other Faults ; and when the Refuge of Lies is thus took from him, he will scarce dare to commit any known Sin.

I WOULD gladly enlarge, but the Bounds of my Discourse will not permit. You must see, that the Steps and Instances which I have mentioned, are such as the Man should persist in through Life ; and Childhood is the proper Time for settling the Principles of these virtuous Habits. If these are not formed by proper Discipline, during this Season, the contrary Tempers will be formed, and contracted ; and being contracted so early, may perhaps be ascribed to Natural Temper : Whereas most of that which now passes for Natural Temper, whether *good* or *bad*, is the secret Result of Education and Example.

I ONLY add, that in training Children at this Age, Regard should be had to the Way and Business they should follow in after Life ; and the Method of Education drawn from their Circumstances, and the Genius and Abilities which they now discover. All this, and much more, arises from the Direction in my Text, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go.* I now proceed,

II. To consider the encouraging Promise and Enforcement which is added, *And when he is old he will not depart from it.* This is not an absolute Promise, that admits of no Exception. It is enough, if it generally holds good, as it doubtless will, where the hopeful Child does not afterwards fall into bad Hands. And even in such unhappy Cases, the disappointed Parent has this for his Support, that he has done his Duty, and *delivered his own Soul.* Besides, the melancholy Instances that seem to weaken the Force of this Promise, are not so many as the World imagines. We too often see the Children of religious Parents miscarry — but if we trace back to the prior Causes, we shall find, that most of these

C

were

were not trained up in Childhood, and disposed of afterwards, as they ought to have been.

IN Childhood the Mind, as well as the Body, is tender and pliable, easily formed into the Shape we chose, which by Time and Habit becomes fixed; and it is of infinite Advantage, when the Principles of Prudence, Virtue, and Piety, get the first Possession of the Heart and Soul, before the Entrance of Vice and Impiety. If Virtue and Piety be cherished, there are no contrary Principles of equal Strength to cast them out. See *Prov.* ii. 10, 11.

HAD I time to enter into the Law of Habits, provided by the Author of our Being, I might from thence argue the Truth, and Force of this Promise. Habits are contracted by Training and Practice; and no Habits are so lasting, as those that are contracted in Childhood and Youth; nor any so strong, as those that are of a *moral* Nature. I may here add, that pious and good Habits when once settled, must needs be stronger, and take faster Hold of the Mind, than vicious and bad ones. The Reason is plain; because the



Mind always approves the *good*, but disapproves the *bad*.

BUT let me argue from the Nature of God, who has made and intended us all for Virtue and Piety, and not for Vice and Folly. God would have all Men, and all Children, to be saved, and come to the Knowledge of Truth and Goodness. Every Child is his Creature — his Hand *formed and fashioned it altogether* — He *planted it a noble Vine, wholly a right Seed* — and subjects it to the Care of Parents and Guardians. This is the Provision that God has made for the Preservation of it's Body, and the Culture of it's Mind, in the Beginning of Life. But if Parents neglect their Charge, it is easy to see, how it becomes *turned into a wild and degenerate Plant*. If Parents can be prevailed upon to do their Part, we may safely and comfortably leave the rest with the God of all Grace. And if some of these Children who have been thus *trained up in the Way they should go*, afterwards suffer themselves to be seduced for a Time, though doubtless they will pay dear for it, and may die in their Sins, before this Time comes, yet when the Heat of Youth is cooled, and they come to

be sober and thoughtful, the Principles of Education will revive, and it will be found that the *Seed remains in them*.—And the Promise in my Text is found literally true, *Train up a Child in the Way he shall go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*. See *Psal. lxxxix. 30—34*.

II. WHAT now remains, is to enforce upon Parents a faithful Discharge of that great Duty which I have been setting before them. This I shall do by referring to two Branches of Scripture-History; and then conclude with a general Exhortation.

FOR ENCOURAGEMENT, FIRST let Parents consider the History of *Abraham*, the Father of many Nations. In *Gen. xviii. 18, 19*. it is promised, *Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty Nation, and all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed in him*. Why so? The Reason follows, *For I know Abraham, that he will command his Children (whilst Children) and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath spoken of him*. Here Parents, you see God's Method

Method in the Constitution of Nature, and Course of his Providence, whereby he conveys down his Blessings *from and by* Parents to Children, to *thousands of Generations of them that fear him, and keep his Commandments*. It is by Parents, in Imitation of faithful *Abraham*, commanding their Children and their Household after them, and training them up from their Childhood in the Way they should go. It is here farther observable, that this Promise was made to *Abraham* by the Angel, that was sent to destroy *Sodom*; and delivered, whilst he stood looking down upon that devoted City; where (righteous *Lot* and his Family excepted) every Person and Family, Root and Branch, perished for ever. Now knowing the Reason with God for commanding a Blessing upon *Abraham*, and his Seed after him, we may learn the Reason with God for destroying *Sodom*. This was not only the Wickedness of that Age, but the Neglect of the rising Generation. There was no Family-Religion, nor any Care or Concern about Posterity. — And whenever that is the Case, it is high Time that Family or City should be extinct, and cut off.

## SERMON

## I.

Exodus  
xxxiv. 6,  
7.

AND here know, that God is in one Mind, the same Yesterday, To-day and for ever. — *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for thousands of Generations, of them that fear him, and keep his Commandments. — But visiting the Iniquities of the Fathers upon their Children (if persisted in) to the third or fourth Generation.* Be it the third or fourth Generation, before utter Destruction comes (such is the long-suffering of God) yet if Children are neglected and exposed, and God do not destroy them sooner ; in the third or fourth Generation, such Families will extirpate themselves, or be extirpated by the righteous Judgments of God.

ALL that remains of old *Eli* and his Family, is the History of their Destruction, and the Reason of it, preserved as a Warning to all Parents, not to neglect their Children. Read and tremble, *And the Lord said unto Samuel, behold, I will do a Thing in Israel, at which both the Ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. For in that Day I will perform against Eli all Things which I have spoken concerning his House. When I begin, I will*

1 Sam. iii.  
11—24.

will also make an End; for I have told him, that I will judge his House for ever; for the Iniquity which he knoweth. The Iniquity was this — Because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. — It follows Ver. 14. Therefore have I sworn unto the House of Eli, that the Iniquity of Eli's House shall not be purged with Sacrifice, nor with Offering for ever. How awful is this Story! Eli was now ninety and eight Years old, and his Eyes dim, that he could not see, — and his Sons of full Age, ministering in the Priest's Office, grown now above his Restraint. — Of how much sorer Judgment then shall you be thought worthy, if your young Children make themselves vile, and you restrain them not? This doubtless was the Ground and Reason both of Eli's Judgment, and his Sons Vileness, that he neglected to restrain them in their *younger Years*; for if this be not done in *Childhood* and *Youth*, it will be in vain to attempt it afterwards.

To conclude — Parents, you now see your great Duty, and the Encouragement you have to set about it. Your Care begins, when your Child is born, yea, sooner. Your Authority

thority commences, when your Children become Rational Beings, capable of Instruction; and continues *absolute*, during their Childhood. Now you are to command, and your Children to obey. The Case will be different in the succeeding Stages of Life, as I shall shew in a future Discourse from another Subject. Be not you like those Parents, who think that little or nothing can be done in *Childhood*. Little good can be expected without your Aid, but much may be done with it: And if not done now, you probably lose your Opportunity and Power for ever.

You can never sufficiently admire the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who puts your Children into your Hands, in such a weak and tractable State, both of Mind and Body. If they had been born with that Strength and Capacity of Mind and Body, which they have in the Time of *Youth*; but as ignorant as they now are, upon their Entrance into Life, they had been the most unteachable and untractable, Monsters in Nature. Take Care then, that you do not suffer them to become such Monsters, thro' your Neglect. For there is no such wild,  
untractable,



untractable, mischievous Creature upon Earth, as an undisciplined Youth. It is *now*, in Childhood, that you Parents must do your *first* and *chief* Work. It is *now*, you must gain your Authority and Ascendency over the Minds and Hearts of your Children, and bring them into easy Subjection. It is *now*, that you must form in them every Infant-Virtue, and bring every Thought and Imagination into a Preparedness for submitting to the Laws both of God and Man. Now, I say, is your Time — NOW or NEVER. Now, O Parents, the Work is your's, not your Children's. You are to lead — they are to follow — you are to teach, they are to learn — you are to Command, they are to obey. Upon the Authority of my Text, I promise in their Name, that if you do your Duty, they will do theirs — and be your Comfort here, and your Joy and Crown of rejoicing for ever. *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*



## S E R M O N II.

The MORTALITY of CHILDREN  
considered and improved.



JOB i. 18—22.

*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, thy Sons, and thy Daughters were eating and drinking Wine in their eldest Brother's House — And behold there came a great Wind from the Wilderness, and smote the four Corners of the House, and it fell upon the Young Men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. — Then Job arose and rent his Mantle, and shaved his Head, and fell down upon the Ground, and worshipped; and said — Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked shall I return thither — The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away — blessed be the Name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

THE

THE Mortality of Children, as well as of Parents, needs no Proof. Daily Observation evinces this awful Truth. *One dieth in his full*

*Strength, being wholly at Ease and quiet : His Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones are moistened with Marrow. — Another dieth in the Bitterness of his Soul, and never eateth with Pleasure. They lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms cover them. Yea many die from the Womb, and give up the Ghost, when they come out of the Belly. In short, not one half live to half the Age of Man. May I not say, not one half survive the Term of Childhood ? So true is it, That Man who is born of a Woman, is of few Days, and full of Trouble. He cometh forth like a Flower : and is cut down : He fleeth also as a Shadow, and continueth not.*

IT is not the Mortality of Infants ; nor of adult Persons, that I now purpose to consider, but shall confine my Thoughts more particularly to the State of *Childhood* ; with a View to excite Parents to the most early and diligent Care in the Education of their Young Children ; that both they and their Children

SERMON  
II.

Children may be provided for this Event, if it should please God, in the Course of his all-wise and righteous Providence, to take from them, and take to himself, the Souls of their dear Children. And let not Parents put this Thought from them, as an unlikely Event, or as some rare or new Thing in the Earth, since Parents more frequently follow their Children to the Grave, than Children their Parents.

PERHAPS you may think my present Subject not so proper for this particular Purpose; imagining from Ver. 4, 5, 13. that *Job's* seven Sons and three Daughters, who all died together in an Instant, were all grown up, and settled in Houses, and had Families of their own; and consequently had long survived the State of Childhood. An English Reader must conclude so from the Face of our Translation; but a little Consideration will make the Contrary more than probable. Had this been the Case, *Job* must have been an old Man: Whereas the Close of this Book tells us, that he lived to have seven Sons and three Daughters more, and to retrieve, yea, redouble his Substance in the Earth. The two last Verses, which  
mention

mention his great Age, tell us, that he lived to see *his Sons, and his Son's Sons, even four Generations* : but these two Verses, as *Grotius* observes, appear to have been an Addition to the Book by some later Hand.

BESIDES, there is in the Original, no mention of any *House*, but that of the *eldest Brother*, where the other Brothers and Sisters made a Practice of regaling themselves together in a Manner that gave great Concern to their good Father, as appears from Ver. 5. — It was at one of these Festivals, that they all perished in a Moment. Farther, we read nothing of their Wives and Children perishing along with them, as might have been expected; but only *Job's* seven Sons and three Daughters. I have one Thing to observe, that when the Bearer of this melancholy News tells *Job*, that the *House fell upon the young Men and they are dead*; in the Hebrew it is not *young Men*, but *Children* — and the Greek Translation calls them *little Children* \*; as some of them appear to have been, and others not much older.

IT now remains to be considered, how *Job* behaved himself, and how every tender

\* LXX. *παιδια*.



der and pious Parent should behave, under affecting Providences of this Sort. And,

FIRST, he shewed a deep Sorrow and Concern of Mind, becoming an affectionate and tender Father. — *He arose and rent his Mantle, and shaved his Head, and fell upon the Ground and worshipped.*

SECONDLY, he expressed a just Sense of his great Loss; and a pious Submission to the Will of God. — *And Job said, Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked shall I return thither — The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.* It is properly added, *in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

IN farther discoursing from this Subject, I would consider,

- I. THE Nature and Reasonableness of pious Grief and Concern, under such sorrowful and affecting Providences.
- II. I WOULD shew, that a pious Resignation to the Hand and Will of God, is the great Duty, and the chief Support of the mournful Parent. And then,

III.



*considered and improved.*

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II.

III. I WOULD point out some of the Uses, that should be made of such Dispensations of Divine Providence.

I. I WOULD consider, the Nature and Reasonableness of pious Grief and Concern under such sorrowful and affecting Providences, as the Death of a Child or Children. *Job's* renting his Mantle — shaving his Head, and falling upon the Ground, are only the external Modes and Formalities of his Country, and would be indecent in our's: But that inward unfeigned Concern of Mind, which *Job* discovered, and natural Expressions of it, are becoming, and a Relief to the burdened Heart. These are no Indications of Weakness, but of natural Affection — The necessary Result of that Instinct, which every Parent ought to cherish towards his own Offspring, and which the God of Nature has implanted in us to secure our Regard for their Life and Happiness.

WE must not therefore so much as attempt to stifle or eradicate these tender Affections. They are the finest, the best and most finished Part of our Nature, and all our other Powers and Faculties without them  
would

SERMON  
II.

would be of little Use. “ Reason alone is  
 “ not, in reality, a sufficient Motive to Vir-  
 “ tue, in such a Creature as Man : But Rea-  
 “ son joined with those Affections, which  
 “ God has implanted upon his Heart ; and  
 “ when these are allowed Scope to exercise  
 “ themselves, under the Government and  
 “ Direction of Reason ; then it is we act  
 “ suitably to our Nature, and to the Circum-  
 “ stances God has placed us in. Neither is  
 “ Affection itself at all a Weakness — nor  
 “ does it argue Defect, any otherwise than  
 “ our Senses and Appetites do : They be-  
 “ long to our Condition of Nature, and are  
 “ what we cannot be without. God Al-  
 “ mighty is, to be sure, unmoved by Passion  
 “ or Appetite, and unchanged by Affection :  
 “ But then, he neither sees, nor hears, nor  
 “ perceives Things by any Senses like ours ;  
 “ but in a Manner infinitely more perfect.  
 “ Now, as it is an Absurdity, almost too  
 “ gross to be mentioned, for a Man to en-  
 “ deavour to get rid of his Senses, because  
 “ the Supreme Being discerns Things more  
 “ perfectly without them. — It is as real,  
 “ though not so obvious an Absurdity, to  
 “ endeavour to eradicate the Passions he has  
 given



Death of a beloved Child, must be proportionate Grief and Sorrow. Never does the Character of a *Jacob*, a *David*, or a *Job*, appear to more Advantage, than when lamenting and discovering their affectionate Grief upon the Death of their Children. See *Job* xxix 2—5.

NOR is this peculiar to Jewish and Christian Parents; or the Effect only of Revealed Religion; but it is the Result of Nature, and found in the Writings and History of the Heathens. So that if any Man love not his own, and especially his own Children, he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. — The finest Passages both in the Greek and Latin Poets are those, where they paint the natural Sorrows of Parents upon the Death of their Children. And *Virgil* not only describes the Grief of pious *Evander* upon the Death of his Son *Pallas* †; But

† At non Evandrum potis est vis ulla tenere;  
Sed venit in medios: feretro Pallanta reposito  
Procumbit super; atque hæret lacrymansque gemenſque.  
Et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est.

————— Tuque O sanctissima Conjux,  
Felix morte tuâ, neque in hunc servata dolorem!  
Contra Ego vivendo vici mea fata, superstes  
Restarem ut Genitor —————

*Æn.* xi. l. 148.

*considered and improved.*

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II.

But likewise the distressing Sorrow of the Tyrant and *Atheist Mezentius*, upon the Death of his brave and pious Son *Lausus* \*. I only add, that the Brute-Creation mourn the Loss of their Young. So that the Parent is worse than *brutish*, who hath stifled this tender Affection — He or She is *without natural Affection, implacable, unmerciful.*

I KNOW it is common to address Parents on these Occasions with every Thing that may sooth, stifle, and suppress their Sorrow. But I have said thus much to awaken it; being apprehensive that more Parents want to have a proper Concern roused up, than those who need to have it abated. Yea, many of the Stoick kind, have thought it the Perfection of Virtue to suppress the natural Affections, but have found it impossible, and the Attempt hurtful. I will proceed presently to shew the proper Bounds, and the

D 2

pious

\* Canitiem immundo deformat pulvere, et ambas  
Ad Cælum tendit palmas, et corpore inhæret.  
——— Heu ! nunc misero mihi demum  
Exilium infelix — nunc altè vulnus adactum  
——— Quid me erepto, sævissime, nato  
Terres ? hæc via sola fuit, quâ perdere posses.  
Nec mortem horremus, nec Divum parcimus ulli.

Æn. x. l. 844.

pious Sentiments, that should support and compose the Soul. But at present, I advise to let parental Love give free Vent to itself in correspondent Grief and Sorrow. Our dear Saviour wept over the Grave of his Friend *Lazarus*, and mingled his with the Tears of the weeping Sisters. Let pious Grief freely discharge itself. It is the natural Relief, which God has provided for the burdened Soul. If it be not forced, nor suppressed, there is no Danger, under the Conduct of Piety, of its becoming pernicious, or continuing too long. When the Mind thinks it has paid this last Tribute, it will find Ease, and conceive Satisfaction, such as will give Pleasure upon Review. And know this, that if there is nothing else mixed with them, our Passions are but temporary Emotions, and particularly our Grievs and Sorrows. Our Minds may be disturbed and muddled by afflictive Providences, as the fair Stream by Floods and Storms, but it works itself clear in due Time by the Course of Grief, and the Discharges that our Creator has provided for us. — So fearfully and wonderfully are we made. It is God that bindeth up the broken-hearted, and  
comforts



comforts those that mourn — and when we fancy we shall go down to the Grave mourning, he comforts us again after the Days wherein he has afflicted us; and like to *Job*, blesteth our latter End more than the Beginning.

It is not *Grief* and *Sorrow*, that we should suppress — no, let us leave that to God: But it is *IMPATIENCE*, a very different Thing — this should not be moderated, but wholly resisted and cast out. *Impatience* and *Sorrow*, I say, are two quite different Things, though too often confounded. You may know their Difference by this Criterion — Sorrow, natural and godly Sorrow, does not choose Cessation but Indulgence. Whilst Sorrow freely discharges itself it imperceptibly runs off, and the Soul is pleased with the grateful Sensation. But Impatience, as the Word imports, is a Temper the Mind CANNOT BEAR. — It grows restless, frets, and struggles to free itself from it's intolerable Burden: And being unable, Indignation and Rage arises, productive of Self-Torment, in Proportion to it's Degree and Continuance. This is *the Sin*, the very *Sin*, that doth so easily beset us. —

Heb. xii.

The *only Sin*, that is said to do so. It the more easily befalls us, as it comes upon us under the Name and Appearance of natural or godly *Sorrow*: though no two Things were ever more different. Because we do well to be serious and sorrowful, we think with *Jonah*, that *we do well to be angry and impatient*. Sorrow, when the Object and Providence calls for it, is always right, and works some Good: But Impatience is always wrong, and Works some Evil. You may know it by it's Fruits — I shall mention some of them, and then proceed to warn against it in every Shape and Degree.

FIRST, Impatience generally begins, not with a Flow of Tears, but with *fullen Silence*. Thus *Job* was impatient, not upon the Death of his Children (for here he shewed deep Sorrow, but no Impatience) but when smote with sore Boils from the Sole of his Foot to the Crown of his Head. Nor did he then grow fullen and impatient at *first*; but when his Wife asked him, *Dost thou still retain thy Integrity? Curse God and die*, he patiently replies, *What! Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil? In all this did not Job*  
*sir*

*fin with his Lips.* But when he had sat down seven Days and seven Nights, and none spake a Word unto him, seeing that his Grief was very great; *He then opened his Mouth, and cursed his Day,* in Language not to be justified, not to be excused; but only on Supposition, he was now spent out with Pain, Watching, and Fasting; which frequently produces an excusable Delirium, though the Language be very indecent. However, it should be a Caution against *sullen Silence.* Again,

NEXT, IMPATIENCE exerts itself in inward Vexation and Restlessness of Soul, attended with Confusion, and a Desire to do something we know not what, in order to free ourselves from the Hand and Stroke of Divine Providence. When this comes to be the Case, submissive Sorrow is gone, and the Spirit of Impatience has got hold upon us; and if not timely suppressed, will produce the following Effects.—A Refusal to be comforted — an Aversion to Company — an Abstinence from Food — a Neglect of necessary Business — a Dissatisfaction with God — an Indignation against him — a Renunciation of Religion as vain — a Wearisome-

ness of Life — a giving up of all Hope — till it sometimes terminates in this, *Curse God and die* †. From this dreadful Temper, — This desperate Impatience, and every Thing leading to it, good God deliver us! Is this Sorrow? Is this immoderate Sorrow? No, it bears no Resemblance to so tender and pious a Passion. It is a Mixture of Indignation, Wrath, impotent Revenge, and every Thing that is Evil. This Sorrow of the World worketh Death. — But the Spirit of godly Sorrow is the Reverse, as described *Psalms* cxxxi. 2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a Child that is weaned of his Mother; my Soul is even as a weaned Child* — that weeps for a while, and then becomes chearful and easy. Having seen the Nature of Impatience, I proceed,

SECONDLY, to dissuade from it in every Shape, and in every Degree, on all Occasions, and particularly if God should take from us one or more of our dear Children.

IN

† Cum, complexa sui Corpus miserabile nati  
Atque Deos, atque Astra vocat crudelia mater.

Virg. Ecl. v. l. 22.

Nec Mortem horremus, nec Divum parcimus ulli.

Æn. x. l. 880.

IN all such Cases where the Hand of God is concerned, though Sorrow is decent and becoming, yet Impatience is *impotent* and *vain*. It is striving against the ALMIGHTY to no Purpose. *If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, who can hinder him, or say to him, What dost thou?* We may as soon remove Mountains, as reverse any one of the Works of God. We may as soon create a new Being, as raise one from the Dead.

As Impatience is *impotent*, so it serves only to aggravate our Trouble, and encrease our Vexation. All it does for us is to make bad worse. *The impatient Man teareth himself in his Anger: Shall the Earth be forsaken for thee? And shall the Rock be removed out of its Place?* But this is not the worst.

Job xviii.  
4.

IMPATIENCE denies, or at least forgets God, and the Right he has over his own Creatures, to dispose of them according to his Divine Wisdom, and Sovereign Pleasure. Our Children are God's Creatures, and his Property, not ours. He made them, and not we ourselves — yea, the World is his, and the Fulness thereof.

It follows hence, that Impatience is *Impiety*; as it opposes the Authority, impeaches the

the Wisdom, and denies the Goodness and Righteousness of God. If possible, it would wrest the Reins of Government out of God's Hands, under a Pretence of more Goodness and Compassion, and of more Knowledge of what is right, than God is possessed of.

I ONLY add, that such Impatience denies, that there is another Life and World after this; and forgets the Nature of *both*. If we know any Thing, we know that our Time here is short, and this World is not intended to be our lasting State of Abode. *Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full of Trouble.* And, when we grow impatient at the Death of a dear Relation or Friend, and mourn as *those that are without Hope*, we forget *that Rest, which remaineth for the People of God*; that better and eternal Life, which is the Gift of God, in Jesus Christ our Lord — especially when impatient upon the Death of an innocent Child, or a pious and good Friend. *Blessed are the Dead, that die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them.* I have said enough to shew the evil Nature of all Impatience, and to dissuade from it — and to shew the  
Nature



Nature and Reasonableness of natural Grief, and pious Sorrow, under such affecting Providences.

I SHOULD now have proceeded to my second Proposal, but must reserve that to another Opportunity.

I SHALL conclude with a Recommendation of virtuous Patience, and pious Resignation to the Will and Providence of God. It is hard, says the Poet §, when comforting his mourning Friend, “It is hard — but “what cannot be altered becomes lighter “by PATIENCE.” Patience and Piety, or pious Patience, is our only and all-sufficient Relief. Let me here recommend this Principle and Spirit, as a Cure for all Sorrow, as Mr. *Hales* recommends Repentance as a Cure for all Sins. — *Pious Patience*, or *Submission* under the Hand of God, is a Word of that singular Weight and Moment, that it contains in it all the Christian’s Art, Wisdom, and great Strength, by which all the Sufferings and Sorrows of the World are frustrated and defeated altogether. If we survey

§ Durum! Sed levius fit Patientiâ  
Quicquid corrigere est nefas.

Hor. Od. xxiv, L. 1.

survey and sum up all their Forces, this One Word, and what is intended by it, contains that in it, which disannuls them all. The great Physician *Galen*, observed of the Diseases of the Body, that to suppose there were some one Cure for all Maladies, were extreme Folly. The Diseases of the Body must each have a proper Antidote to prevent them, and a proper Remedy to cure them — Besides the Difference from the Temper, Age, Custom, and Diet of the Patient, must be attended to. But in the Cure of pious Souls, and inward Sorrows, though the Causes are various, as well as the Cases, there is but one Preservative, and one Remedy; and that is *Pious Patience*, and Submission to the Will of God. *Patience and Piety* compounded and took together, are the only Sovereign *Panacea*, or *All-beal*, for the sorrowful mourning Soul. These two Simples, Patience and Piety, cheap and easy, suited to all Climates, and to every Man's own Garden, compose an universal Medicine for all our Grievs, and all our Sorrows. All *Gilead* will yield no other Balm but this. We have not, like some Physicians, a Box,  
and

and a Box. — One Receipt for the Rich, and another for the Poor — one for the Old, and another for the Young — one for the Parent, and another for the Child — The spiritual Cure of the mourning Soul admits of no such Partiality; but from the Sceptre to the Spade, from Childhood to Old Age, there is but one Remedy; but one Relief, and that is, *Pious Patience*, and Submission under the Hand of God.

I CONCLUDE with a Paraphrase upon the Words of our dear and compassionate Saviour, who came to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort them that mourn, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest.* — *Come, take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.* As if he had said, Take your Yoke upon you as I take mine — take up your Cross, or Crosses, as I take up mine; and bear it with the same Temper and Spirit — Mine you see is *meek* and *lowly*, patient and submissive — take up, and submit to your's with the same Spirit, and *ye shall find Rest to your Souls*, as I find Rest to mine.

Matt. xi.  
28, 29, 30.

— For

— *For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* Mine is in itself as heavy, and as uneasy, as any of your's is, or ever will be; but to me it is easy and light; all owing to the Frame of my Spirit, which is *meek* and *lowly*, humble and submissive, patient and pious — do you learn of me the same Spirit, and your Yoke will be as easy, and your Burden as light as mine.





## S E R M O N    I I I .

The MORTALITY of CHILDREN  
considered and improved.



JOB i. 21.

— *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken  
away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

IN a former Discourse from this,  
I and some preceding Verses, I  
have considered,

SERMON  
III.

I. THE Nature and Reasonableness of pious Grief and Concern, under such sorrowful and affecting Providences as the Death of a Child or Children: And now proceed, as I promised,

II. To shew, that a pious, humble Resignation to the Hand and Will of God, is the great Duty, and the chief Support

Support of the mournful Parent: Such as *Job* discovers in my Text, *Job worshiped, and said — The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away — blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Here is a Temper and Behaviour, that commends itself to every Parent, without the Need of one Argument.

If you ask, what Thoughts, and what Arguments are most proper, to beget this happy Submission of Soul? I Answer, They are all comprized in this one Thought, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.* There are a Number of little, low, childish Considerations, that are frequently offered; but they are none of them worth mentioning, nor fit to be named, along with this One, which is *all in all — The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.* This can never be repeated too often, nor thought on too much: and if allowed it's proper Force, the Conclusion will be, *Blessed be the Name of the Lord.* The Work of it will be Peace, and the Effect of it Composure, Quietness, and Assurance for ever. *It is the Lord — let him do what seemeth him Good,* says old Father



Father *Eli*, when *Samuel* told him of the approaching Death of his Sons. *I was dumb*, says the Psalmist, *I opened not my Mouth, because Thou didst it*. When the Christians Eye is up to God, his Hand is upon his Mouth. — “ I am resigned.” — That is the Language of his Soul — “ I am resigned, because thou didst it — it is the Lord; that is enough. Be still, O my Soul, and know, that it is God, who will and ought to be exalted in the Earth.” This one Thought, this short, but awful and big Thought, is enough to silence all Complaints, and to prevent all Impatience. “ Had an Enemy done it, or a Fellow-Man took away the Life of my Child, I would have shown a proper Resentment; but it is my Friend, my Almighty Friend — mine, and my Child’s best Friend — *Father thy Will be done*. — “ Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? “ Why art thou disquieted within me? Trust “ in God, for thou shalt yet praise him.”

THE Reason of all this is obvious — If it be the Lord’s doing, it must be right; whether we see his *particular* Reasons and Designs or not. Indeed there would be little Depth of Wisdom, or Length of Design,

SERMON  
III.

Job xi. 6.

in the Providence and Government of God, if there were no more than we short-sighted Creatures can discover and comprehend. As Zophar reminds Job, *If God should speak, and shew thee the Secrets of Wisdom, they are double to that which is known, he goes on, Canst thou by searching find out God? (the Depths of his Design) Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea. If therefore he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? As for God, his Way is perfect — he is wise in Counsel, and excellent in working — And though but a small Portion of his present, future, and eternal Designs lie open to our View, yet he has not left himself without Witness, in that he is always doing good. We have Samples and Evidences enough of the consummate Wisdom, and fatherly Goodness of God, to convince us, that when Clouds and Darkness are around him, and the thickest Gloom hangs over us, yet Justice and Judgment are the Habitation of his*

considered and improved.

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his Throne: Mercy and Truth go before his Face.

SERMON  
III.

MANY particular Providences, may I not say all, are like *Daniel's* Vision, and the Answer of God to him, stands as a satisfactory Answer to us. *And I heard, but I understood not. Then said I, O my Lord, What shall be the End of these Things? Or what is the Reason of them? And he said, Go thy Way, Daniel, for the Words are closed up and sealed till the Time of the End.—Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the End.—But go thy Way till the End be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy Lot at the End of the Days. Or as in Hab. ii. 3. The Vision is yet for an appointed Time; but at the End it shall speak, and not lie—though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. O happy Day! when the End shall reveal the Counsel of God, and prove that all Things have been working together for good to them, that love him. Then shall I behold thy Face in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy Likeness.*

Dan. xii.  
8, 9, 12.  
13.

LET me illustrate and conclude this with the History of Father *Jacob*. When he

SERMON  
III.

Genesis  
xxxvii.  
33, 34, 35.

Gen. xlii.  
36, 37, 38.

Gen. xlv.  
26, 28.

was first made to believe, that his Son *Joseph* was dead, and concluded without doubt, some evil Beast had rent and devoured him ; *Jacob mourned for his Son many Days, and refused to be comforted, saying, I will go down into the Grave unto my Son, mourning.* Again we find him under a like groundless Apprehension, crying out, *Me have ye bereaved of my Children — Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away, all these Things are against me. — My Son shall not go down with you ; for his Brother is dead, and he is left alone. — Ye will bring down my gray Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.* Look forward to the Event, and you will find all had been conspiring *Jacob's Joy*, and the Welfare of his Children : And his Transport of Joy (resembling something what we may hope for, when we come to Heaven) far exceeded his former Sorrow, when he received the Tidings, that *Joseph*, whom he had so long given up for lost, *Joseph is yet alive ; and is Governor over all the Land of Egypt. — Jacob's Heart fainted for Joy —* and when he came to himself, *he said, it is enough — Joseph my Son is yet alive — I will go and see him before I die.* But, O my Friends,

Friends, how much higher and truer Joy, when we come to find our beloved Children in Heaven, *to die no more*, but to dwell together in fulness of Joy for ever! Then shall we find, that these pious Sorrows, and light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, have been working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

BUT may I not speak in the Bitterness of my Soul, and say to God, as *Job* did, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?* I answer, No. — *Behold in this thou art not just;* Job xxxiii.  
12, 13. I will answer thee, in the Words of *Elibu*, *God is greater than Man. Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not Account of any of his Matters.* For this *Job* afterwards humbled himself before God, when called to account for it. Job xl.  
1—5. *Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine Hand upon my Mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer — yea twice, but I will proceed no farther.*

THE Conclusion of all is this, SUBMISSION, pious *Submission*, to the Almighty, All-wise, Righteous, and Good GOD, is at once the great Duty and Happiness of Man. Resigning then, for ever resigning up the Spirit of Impatience; and submitting ourselves under the mighty Hand of God, let us with one Heart, and with one Voice, say to him,

‘ Father thy Will be done here upon Earth,  
 ‘ as it is done in Heaven. — Not my Will,  
 ‘ but thine be done — It is the Lord, let  
 ‘ him do what seemeth him good — Deal  
 ‘ with me and with mine for the future, as  
 ‘ thou plearest; for all mine are thine, and  
 ‘ thou art mine — Thou hast my best, my  
 ‘ free, and full Consent — Lead me whither  
 ‘ thou wilt — Dispose of me as thou plearest;  
 ‘ I will patiently and piously submit; and  
 ‘ defend thee and thy Providence before all  
 ‘ the World — All is good because thou art  
 ‘ so. Thou art holy in all thy Ways, and  
 ‘ righteous in all thy Works. — *The Lord*  
 ‘ *gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed*  
 ‘ *be the Name of the Lord.*’

III. WHAT now remains, is to point out some of the Uses that should be made of this



this Discourse, and of such Divine Providences as we have been considering. Here not only such Parents have an Interest and Concern, who at present are lamenting the Loss of Child or Children; but every one who is, or may hereafter be a Parent. Yea, Children themselves have an Interest; for it is your Mortality, that is the Subject of our present affected Thoughts. I have an Interest, a deep Interest and Concern myself. Though blessed, doubly blessed be the Name of the Lord, I was never called forth to attend the Funeral of a Child of my own; and would fain hope, I never shall, yet still my Hope is not without trembling. My Sons have survived *Infancy* and *Childhood*; but not *Mortality*. It still remains for them as well as myself, and every one of us, once to die; but *when*, or *how soon*, God only knows. Let it not be thought, I never felt this Kind of Sorrow, or these Supports, which I have been speaking of. — Let not any such Thought weaken the Force of the Truths, I have delivered. I have had my Share of Trials and Afflictions of a different Kind, and would fain hope, God will excuse me here. I am no Stranger to Sorrow, nor un-

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2 Cor. i.  
3, 4.

acquainted with Grief. — And, blessed be God, I am no Stranger to his Divine Consolations and Supports. I have the Bowels of a Parent, and have felt their Workings. Nor am I wholly a Stranger to that particular Sorrow of a Parent upon the Death of a Child; and know how to sympathize and feel with the Parent, when touched in this tender Part. I always considered my dear Sons as *mortal*, from the Time of their Birth; and do so still. Besides many other trying Seasons, it is now not two Years since \*, I was called forth to resign up one of them, and all Hopes of his Recovery. — I received him back, and still regard him, *as one alive from the Dead*; and I hope, as such, he has yielded up himself and his Life to God. Let me here borrow our Apostle's Language, *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort; who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them, which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* Job's Friends were miserable Comforters. The bitterest Sarcastm is that, with which

\* This was delivered February 20, 1763.

which *Eliphaz* makes the first Attack. *Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak Hands: Thy Words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble Knees; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest — it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy Fear* (referring to what *Job* had said in the Close of his Speech, Chap. iii. 25, 26.) *thy Confidence, thy Hope, and the Uprightness of thy Ways.* “O my God, lay no more  
“ upon me, than what thou wilt enable me  
“ to bear — Fit me for thy whole will concerning me and mine. — May thy Grace  
“ with me, be sufficient for me, and thy  
“ Strength made perfect in my Weakness.  
“ — O my God, forsake me not, till I have  
“ shewed thy Strength unto this Generation,  
“ and thy Power to every one, that is to come.  
“ Hitherto, no Temptation has taken me,  
“ but such as is common to man (the Death  
“ of a Child is so) and this is my Encouragement, God is faithful, who will not suffer me to be tried above my Ability, but  
“ will with every Trial find a Way for my  
“ Escape, that I may be able to bear it.”  
Whilst we do our Duty, and live resigned  
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and submissive to God, we need not doubt of his all-supporting Spirit, the great Comforter. I now proceed to name the Uses and Improvement proper to be made of this Discourse.

I. Let Parents seriously consider, and lay to Heart the *Mortality* of their Children. To do this, would be a proper Use and Improvement of this Sermon, and of the frequent Calls and Providences of God, which have the same Tendency. Children die as well others. More die before their Parents, than what survive them. Some in Infancy—some in Childhood, and others in Youth, or riper Years. Few, comparatively, live to half the Age of Man, and follow their Parents to the Grave. Their tender Frame more easily catches Diseases, and is more difficultly cured. Their Imprudence, Rashness, and Precipitancy, run them into more Dangers, and more Deaths. Now were this duly attended to, and considered, it would not fail to produce the best Effects, respecting both Parents and Children.

FIRST, it would excite in Parents a tender Care and Watchfulness over their Children's Lives. They have not Prudence and Expe-

Experience to direct their Ways, to regulate their Appetites, and make their Choice. Remember therefore, your Children are *mortal* — yea, remember how frail they are, and that God has appointed you their natural Guardians.

AGAIN, this one Thought, if any Thing, will excite and preserve in you the most early and serious Concern to train them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. This is the great End, I have had in View through this Discourse. “ My Child is mortal ; what  
“ I do, I must do quickly — my Child may  
“ die *young* — may die soon : Whatever  
“ therefore my Hand findeth me to do, I  
“ must do it with all my Might ; for there  
“ is no doing it in the Grave, whither we  
“ are both hastening.”

THIRDLY, our Children are mortal ; let us then not confine their Education to what may fit them for this Life and World, and for serving their Generation here upon Earth, but let us mix with this what may fit them for Death and Heaven ; that whilst young, *some good Thing may be found in them towards God — that for them to live may be Christ, and to die gain.* Your Children are sooner capable of this Education for God and Heaven,



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ven, than for a long Life here upon Earth, — and the Odds is, that they are born and intended, not for an Inheritance here upon Earth, in a State of Manhood ; but only to prepare for Death and Heaven. You ought indeed, to provide for them, and train them up to a Capacity to provide for themselves, and for a Family of their own : But if these Things ought to be done, surely the other should not be left undone. You will see this, whenever you consider their *Frailty* and *Mortality*. Besides, whatever is done this Way, will be of more Advantage to them in this World, if Life be spared, than any Thing you can either do or provide for them besides. Yea, without the Culture of Virtue and Piety, you are only providing for the Flesh, to enable them to fulfil the Lusts thereof.

FOURTHLY, As this will prepare them for being took from you ; so it will be the best Preparative for your parting with them, and support under it. This appears to have been the Ground-Work of *Job's* Patience, and pious Composure upon the Death of his Children. He had lived and behaved to them, under a constant Sense of their *Mortality*;



talities; from whence the sudden and sad Tidings did not give him that startling and confounding Surprise, they otherwise must have done. *The Thing, says he, which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in Safety, neither had I Rest, neither was I quiet, yet Trouble came.* The Concern for his Children's Virtue and Piety, that this Sense of their Mortality produced, you may judge of, from what you will find Chap. i. 5. when they had been feasting and pleasuring themselves together, *Job sent for them, and sanctified them, and rose up early in the Morning, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all; for Job said, It may be, that my Sons have sinned.— This did Job continually.*

Job iii.  
25, 26.

ALLOW me here to borrow a Citation from a posthumous Sermon of my dear departed Disciple and Friend, who was took from this World in the *Morning* of Life, and the Dawn of his Usefulness, and being dead yet speaketh (composed probably for the Support of his surviving Parents, apprehensive of what might and did happen) "It is undoubtedly some Abatement to a Parent's

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"rent's Joy, that he cannot but be sensible  
 "of the *Mortality* of his Children. Yea,  
 "the better they are, the more he loves  
 "them; and consequently, the heavier must  
 "be his Sorrow for their Deaths; and the  
 "greater his Concern, when he only con-  
 "siders it as a possible Case, that he may  
 "live to lament them. Shall he then study  
 "to banish the Thought of their Mortality?  
 "This would be a very dangerous Expedi-  
 "ent; for, if such an Event should befall  
 "him unexpected, the Surprise might ren-  
 "der his Sorrow insupportable. A Wise  
 "Man therefore will rejoice in his Children  
 "as *mortal* Creatures, and retain it amongst  
 "his inmost Thoughts, that they are every  
 "Day obnoxious to Death. Nor do I see,  
 "why this Apprehension should greatly  
 "damp the Parent's Pleasure and Joy. For  
 "though when he is deprived of his inno-  
 "cent, or of his good and pious Children,  
 "his own Loss is considerable, yet his Chil-  
 "dren's Gain is much greater. They have  
 "escaped early beyond the Reach of human  
 "Miseries, and are become, what they ne-  
 "ver could have been in this World, as hap-  
 "py as he can wish them. His Joy therefore  
 "on

“ on their Account, should balance the Sorrow, he may conceive upon his own \*.”

As a farther Illustration of the Point under Consideration, I would give you the Account we have of *Xenophon's* Behaviour, when Tidings were brought him of the Death of his young Son *Gryllus*; and what he declared was the Reason of his Composure and virtuous Patience. *Xenophon* was a Disciple of *Socrates*, and has left us an Account of his Master's Discipline, and a Treatise of his own, on the Education of Youth, according to which, he had trained and formed his Son *Gryllus*. Take the Account as given by *Seneca*, together with his Remarks, in his Treatise on Consolation, wrote purposely to compose and comfort a mourning Friend.

“ † How just was the Behaviour of *Xenophon*,

\* *Holland's Sermons*, Vol. I. P. 232.

† Quanto ille justior, qui, nuntiata Filii morte, dignam magno Viro vocem emisit? *Ego cum genui, tum moriturum scivi* — Non accepit tanquam *Novum-Nuntium* Filii mortem; quid est enim *Novi*, Hominem mori, cujus tota Vita nihil aliud, quam ad Mortem Iter est? *Ego cum genui, tum moriturum scivi*. Deinde adjecit Rem majoris Prudentiæ et Animi: “ *Huic Rei sustuli.*” Omnes huic rei tollimur — Quisquis ad Vitam editur, ad Mortem destinatur. *Sen. De Consol.* ad Polyb. Cap. 30.

“ *phon*, when the News was brought him  
 “ of his Son’s Death? And his Speech wor-  
 “ thy of a Great Man — “ *When I begat him,*  
 “ *I then knew that he was mortal.*” — He did  
 “ not receive the Death of his Son, as *New-*  
 “ *News* — For what News is it to hear, that  
 “ a Man is dead, whose whole Life is no-  
 “ thing but a Journey to Death? “ *When*  
 “ *he was born, I knew he must die.*” He then  
 “ added another Thing of still greater Pru-  
 “ dence and Magnanimity of Mind, “ *For*  
 “ *this End I took him up.*” — As if he had  
 “ said, I took him into my Arms, and in-  
 “ stead of leaving him to perish, took upon  
 “ me to act the Father; and train him for  
 “ Death — for that very End, that has now  
 “ happened. “ We are all took and trained  
 “ up for the same End. — Whoever is born  
 “ into Life, is destined to Death.” As if  
 “ he had said, Whilst others act the Parent,  
 “ and preserve and train up their Children  
 “ for Life, I preserved and trained mine for  
 “ *Death*, and now the Day is come. They  
 “ think of nothing, but their Child’s Life  
 “ here upon Earth. — No Wonder when  
 “ these their Hopes are disappointed, they  
 “ are distressed; but I thought of his Death,  
 “ and

“ and prepared both him and myself for it,  
“ — my great End is answered, and I am  
“ satisfied — I shall go to him, but he shall  
“ not return to me.” This Conduct of an  
Heathen Moralist, is enough to shame many  
a Christian. Not but that Christians may,  
and ought, to go much farther. Jesus by  
his Death has abolished Death, and by his  
Resurrection has brought Life and Immor-  
tality to Light; and delivered them, who  
through Fear of Death, were, or would have  
been, all their Life-Time, subject to Bon-  
dage. He has consecrated for us a new and  
living Way into Heaven itself. We need  
not therefore sorrow as those who have no  
Hope — but praise the Dead, who are al-  
ready dead, more than the Living, that are  
yet alive. Let mourning Parents, who la-  
ment the Death of their good Children, first  
look around upon this World of Sin, this  
Vale of Tears, and Shadow of Death — and  
then look up to Heaven, and wish their Chil-  
dren into this World again, if they can.

SECONDLY, whilst considering the *Morta-*  
*lity* of our Children, let us not forget our own  
*Mortality*. This again will furnish another  
Incitement, to lose no Time in the Educa-

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tion and Care of our Children ; but what we do, do it quickly. *Seneca's* following Thoughts deserve our Attention. He goes on, “ We  
“ are born, and live to die. Let us there-  
“ fore rejoice in Life, whilst it is given us,  
“ and resign it, whenever we are called for.  
“ Death seizes upon all ; but it passes by  
“ none. Therefore let the Mind stand girt a-  
“ bout—so prepared, that what is *certain*, we  
“ may not fear — and what is *uncertain*, (as  
“ the Time when) this let us be always wait-  
“ ing for. All do not die at the same Age  
“ — Life leaves some at the very Entrance  
“ — others it deserts in the Middle of their  
“ Course — and others it with difficulty lets  
“ go in extreme old Age, though wearied  
“ out, and desirous to be gone. Thus some  
“ die at one Age, and some at another —  
“ here is a *Difference* ; but all are stretching  
“ to the same Place \*.” — the Grave, *the*  
*House appointed for all living.*

BESIDES,

\* Gaudeamus ergo omnes eo quod datur, reddamúsque id, cum reposcemur. Alium alio tempore fata comprehendunt, neminem præteribunt. In procinctu stet animus ; et id, quod necesse est, nunquam timeat : Quod incertum est, semper expectet. Omnes, imò Omnia, in ultimum diem spectant. Non idem universis finis est : Alium in medio cursu,



BESIDES, every Instance of *Mortality* around us — every Funeral we attend — every mournful Procession we see go along the Streets — every sorrowful Family we visit, where Death has entered, should excite us to prepare for our own Death. Have we followed so many of our Friends to the Grave, sure it cannot be long, but our surviving Friends will be called to do this last kind Office for us. God only knows, whose Funeral will be next — As for us, we none of us know, in which World we shall be To-Morrow. The youngest, the strongest, the most healthful, may as soon be dead, as the oldest, and most infirm. If the *Young die*, the *Aged must*, and that soon. As one Generation comes, another goes. *Our Fathers, where are they?* And we their Children must not live for ever. — O Parent! *Set thine House in Order, for thou must die and not live* — not always — not long. Prepare thyself — prepare thy Children — live prepared, and then Life will be easy — Death safe —

F 2

and

curfu vita deferit — Alium in ipso aditu relinquit — Alium in extremâ senectute, faligatum jam et exire cupientem, vix emittit; alio quidem, atque alio tempore, omnes tamen in eundem locum tendimus. Sen. Ibid.

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Acts xx.  
23, 24.

and Heaven secure. Dare not to live one Day more, unbecoming a Mortal, dying Creature : But labour for the Spirit of the great and good Apostle, when Bonds, Imprisonment and Death, awaited him, *None*, says he, *of these Things move me, nor do I account Life dear to myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy.*

THIRDLY, I now conclude with a short, but serious Address to you Children and Young Persons, who are here alive. Ye dear precious, young Souls ! — I told you before, that you had an Interest in this Sermon — a deep and particular Interest. Death has lately entered into this Society, of which you are Members, and seized upon first One, and then Another of your Age, and of your Acquaintance. You, who are now numbered amongst the Living, might have been now numbered free amongst the Dead. This is the Lord's Doing, that *They* are dead, and *You* alive. But you have no Security, that his Hand will stop here. I mention this, not to terrify you, but as my beloved Children, I warn you. To a good Child there is nothing terrible in Death ; but every Thing comfortable. *Suffer little Children to come unto*

unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven, said our dear Saviour, when he took such as you into his Arms, and blessed them. Every one, even the youngest of you, that is of Age and Capacity to hear and understand, what I say ; and to be moved and affected with the Thoughts of God, of Christ, of Death, and of Heaven ; I say, all, and every one of you, are capable of Religion — of being *born from above* — of *setting your Affections on Things above* — of loving God — of praying to him, and praising him. You are capable of hearing, and many of you, of reading God's Word — of cherishing pure and pious Affections, and rising to a Meetness for Friendship and Communion with God here, and for the everlasting Enjoyment of him in Heaven. It is possible for your Souls at *five* or *six* Years old, or perhaps sooner, to be as full of pious Sentiments, and pure Affections, as the Souls of many, yea, of most, at *fifty* or *sixty*. *Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings, God has perfected Praise*. This is the Covenant God has made with us in these Days, saying, *I will put my Laws into their Mind, and write them in their Heart,*

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Heb. viii.  
20, 21.

*and I will be their Father, and they shall be my Sons and Daughters, and they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.* If you are not capable of all that Rational Knowledge, that Men are, who are of full Age, yet you are free from many of their Prejudices, Stains, and Anxieties; and God expects and requires from you, only according to what you are, and what you have, and not according to what you have not.

O THEN! Remember your Creator in the Days of your Childhood and Youth. Chuse God for your God — let his fear be before your Eyes — attend to his Law wrote in your Hearts; and may his Love be shed abroad in your inward Parts, that you may never depart from him. Say to him, *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; my Father's God, and I will exalt thee.*

Eph. vi.  
1, 2, 3.

CHILDREN, obey your Parents in the Lord — submit to their Authority — hearken to their Instructions and Advice — labour to improve in all true Wisdom and Goodness; you will then stand prepared for either World — for both Worlds — for Life or for Death; and for you *to live will be Christ, and*

*considered and improved.*

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*to die gain — so that living or dying, you will be the Lord's. My Heart's Desire and Prayer to God for you, is, that your Lives may be spared, as a Comfort to your Parents, a Blessing to the World, a Credit and Support to Religion, and to God, for a Name and Praise. — But my chief Desire and Prayer unto God, is, that you, and all of us, may stand prepared for the whole Will of God. — That neither Death nor Life — neither Things present, nor Things to come, may be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*





# S E R M O N IV.

The POSSIBILITY of the YOUNG  
MAN preserving his VIRTUE.



PSALM cxix. 9.

*Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his  
Way? By taking Heed thereto, according  
to thy Word.*

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HOEVER considers how much  
the Welfare and Happiness of  
every Man, both for Time and  
Eternity, depends upon the Man-  
ner in which he spends the first *twenty Years*  
of his Life, will see the Importance of this  
Subject, and Inquiry. And whoever looks  
upon the present *Rising Generation*, will see  
with the deepest Concern, that something is  
wanting — and wish from the Bottom of  
his Heart, that something could be farther  
done,



done, to awaken and assist these dear, young, precious Souls. If serious and pious Parents have done their Duty — given their Children the best Education, and trained them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, yet, how do their Hearts tremble for them, when the Time comes, that they must be removed from under their Parents Eye, — go forth into a foolish vicious World — and mix in Company with so many young Persons, whose Education has been neglected, and whose foolish Minds are corrupted. If the virtuous and pious Youth now become ensnared, a good Education is looked upon as useless, and even God and Nature are blasphemed. Whereas, trace this to its true Original, and it will be found, that it arises from the *Want of a good Education*: And those Parents — Those many Parents, must bear the first and chief Blame, who have neglected their Offspring, and turned them out into the World, as the infectious Pests, and Corrupters of Youth.

HERE some Antidote is needful — something to be put into the Heads and Hands of virtuous and pious Minds, to be the Companion of their Youth, and Man of their Counsel,

Counsel, which may help to preserve them from the Paths of the Destroyer, and suggest to them such Rules of Prudence, and Principles of Piety, as may contribute to the Preservation of their Purity and Virtue. My present Subject leads me to inquire into the Method here proposed by the Psalmist, and points to that Way, and those Means, which I judge preferable to all others.

MY Text consists of two Parts.

1st. A SERIOUS and most important Question — *Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his Way?*

2dly. A SHORT but plain and full Answer? *By taking Heed thereto according to God's Word.* As if he had said, “The Thing  
“ is *possible* — and the Way is plain — a few  
“ Words comprise the whole Art — the One  
“ Thing needful for him. He must *take*  
“ *Heed to his Way* — and he must do it ac-  
“ cording to God's Word — more than so,  
“ This is the ONLY *Way* — there is no other  
“ — *The good Old Way* — and Travellers,  
“ though young and unexperienced, shall not  
“ err therein. This is the Way, walk in  
“ it.”

Now in stating the Question before us,

I. LET

- I. LET us settle the *Age* of the Person under Consideration. — *The Young Man*, or Youth. SERMON  
IV.
- II. THE *Purport* of the Question — How he shall *cleanse his Way*.
- III. SHEW, that the Thing required is not impossible, but practicable.
- IV. The *Manner* and *Means* here directed to, contained in the Answer to the Question before us — *By taking Heed thereto, according to thy Word*.

- I. LET us settle the *Age* of the Person under Consideration. — *The Young Man*, or Youth.

THE Life of Man, as one observes, is divided into *five* different Periods, Infancy — Childhood — Youth — Manhood — and Old Age. It is the *third* of these, that now comes under our Consideration, *viz.* Youth — which begins about *twelve*, and ends about twenty, or thirty; according as the Young Man sooner or later becomes fixed and settled in the World in a manly State.

AT the Beginning of this Period, about twelve Years of Age, the Youth is supposed

to

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IV.Luke ii.  
42, 43.

to have received considerable Instruction, and begins to think, enquire, and act for himself. At this Age our Saviour was found in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Teachers, hearing them and asking them Questions; and gives this Reason for it, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's Business?* As if he had said, I am now of Age for it. At this Age, the well educated Youth has gained some good Knowledge of God and Religion — and knows something of the Nature and Tendency of Things; what is right, and what is wrong — what is odious and shameful; and what is honourable and of good Report.

THE Youth is of himself a Rational Being of some Maturity, capable *in Part* of chusing for himself, and directing his own Actions; and consequently is become an *accountable Being*. The Youth now both *will*, and *must*, in a considerable Degree, be left to himself; though not *wholly*. But to be trained, and tended, and corrected, as in Childhood, is what he would be impatient of; though he still needs it more than ever; if he have not the Prudence and Self-Government to *take Heed to his Ways according to God's*

*God's Word.* But, be this as it will, the *Youth*, as I said before, both *must*, and *will*, be left to himself, in a considerable Degree. At this Age most young Persons are sent out into the World, from under the Eye of their Parents and Tutors. And though it is incumbent on the Heads of such Families, where they are placed out, to inspect and be concerned for their Conduct, yet every one must see, that at this Age, whether at *Home* or *Abroad*, the Conduct and Manners of the *Youth* must in a great Measure depend upon himself. Insomuch, that now little farther can be done for him, unless he is principally concerned for his own Safety, Improvement, and Happiness. In *Childhood*, the Parent or Tutor leads and trains; whilst the Child learns and follows. But now, if any Thing great and good be farther secured, the Youth must take the lead; principally concerned for his own Innocence, Honour, and Happiness — desirous of the farther Aid of his Friends, who can now only come in as Assistants at *Second-Hand*. This is supposed in my Text, when it is asked, *Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his Way?* Not where-

wherewith shall his *Parents* and *Friends* do it for him — But, how shall he do it himself.

II. I Go on to consider, the Purport, or Subject Matter of this Inquiry, which is of greater Importance to every *Youth*, than all the World besides, whether *Riches*, *Honours*, or *Pleasures* — yea, of greater Importance to himself, than even Life itself. *How shall a Young Man cleanse his Way?* — That is, “ How shall  
 “ he preserve his Innocence — maintain his  
 “ Virtue — escape the *Corruption which there*  
 “ *is in the World through Lust, which drowns*  
 “ *so many Youths in Ruin and Perdition?* Or,  
 “ How shall he keep clear amidst so many  
 “ evil Examples and Temptations, as he is  
 “ sure to meet with? And whilst the Kinds  
 “ of defiling Sin in our World, are so many  
 “ and various, How shall he keep clear of  
 “ them all? At the same Time steadily pur-  
 “ suing a Life of Virtue and Piety, in the due  
 “ Observance of all those Duties, that become  
 “ his Age and Station in Life.” Nothing less  
 than this, is the Inquiry proposed in my  
 Text. — Or in other Words, “ How shall  
 “ he pass these the Days of his Youth, till  
 “ he



“ he arrive at full *Manhood*, with a pure  
“ Heart — a peaceful Conscience — and an  
“ unpolluted Mind? And in Consequence  
“ with a Soul enriched, and a Character adorned with all the Amiability and Dignity that must result from such a Conversion in the World!”

Now the Question before us is, How shall the *Young Man* effect this? The *Youth* who knows so little of this our foolish sinful World, at his first Entrance upon it? The *YOUTH*, in whom *Reason* is so weak, and the *Passions* so strong? — Whose active Powers are so brisk, and whose Relish for animal, and earthly Pleasures, is so lively?

THESE Thoughts, with many more, that offer themselves, shew this to be an Attempt of the highest Importance — to accomplish which, great Care and Circumspection is doubtless required — together with the best Purposes and Principles constantly prevailing in the Heart, and exciting to a constant Observance of those Rules of Prudence, Virtue and Piety, which will afterwards be considered. Without this it is vain to hope or expect, the *Young Man* should cleanse his Way.

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Isaiah xl.  
30.

ACCORDINGLY if we look into the World, we shall find too many, even of those Youths, who in Childhood have had a good Education, yet when they come to enter upon the World, soon *faint and grow weary, and the Young Men utterly fall.* Their youthful Glory is at once turned into Shame — the Crown fallen from their Heads — themselves robbed of their Innocence — and their distressed Parents of their pleasing Hopes, and promised Comforts — And they themselves become a Scandal and Curse to the World, who were on the Point of becoming some of its choicest Blessings, had they but persevered and watched a few Years longer.

IT is well known, that youthful Lusts war against both *Soul* and *Body* — have slain their thousands, yea, their ten thousands — Whilst these careless Youths have *fallen into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown them in Destruction and Perdition.* This makes it necessary to consider, *Wherewith* the Young Man shall cleanse his Way; who is determined to resolve upon it, if the Thing be practicable. But let me first shew,

III. THAT

III. THAT the Thing here proposed and recommended to the Young Man, is both *possible* and *practicable*. He has it in his Power to *cleanse his Way, if he will take Heed to it according to God's Word*. If he has, whilst under the Care and Tuition of his Parents, passed through *Childhood* and arrived at *Youth*, without committing any gross or defiling Sins — he may now pass through *Youth*, and arrive at *Manhood* in the same State of undefiled Purity; and that with a very large encrease of Knowledge, Virtue and Piety. I add farther, that in case any of you have been neglected or seduced, in the Years of Childhood, into any of those Sins, which too many Children commit, yet as God has now spared you to the Age of Youth, and your Capacities are now encreased, you still have it in your Power to cleanse your Way — to correct what has been wrong and sinful in *Childhood*, and to pass through Youth with Purity and Innocence. You indeed, cannot undo what is past, but you may repent, reform, and find Mercy. And if you are not wanting to yourselves, you may yet cleanse your Way, and

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arrive

arrive at Manhood (if Life be spared) holy, harmless, and undefiled.

You will not imagine, that I am here pleading for a *sinless* Purity and *Perfection*, which no Man is capable of, at any Age; much less the young and unexperienced. Innumerable Frailties and Imperfections must necessarily cleave to such imperfect Creatures as we are. But then let it be well considered, that *These are not the Things that defile a Man*. Nor ought any Thing that defiles the Mind, and offends the Conscience, be looked upon as a mere *Weakness*, and excusable *Frailty*. *Frailties* and *Imperfections* are essentially different from gross *Immoralities*, and shameful Vices; — and whilst the *latter* are expressly condemned, the *other* are readily excused and forgiven, both by God, and by our Fellow-Creatures; knowing, that we are all compassed about by the like Infirmities. — The latter call for Repentance and Conversion. Do not confound Things so widely different, and then you can neither mistake my Design, nor deceive yourselves.

WHAT I plead for, is the *Possibility* of passing through Youth — and consequently through Life, not only without contracting  
settled

settled *Habits*; but without the Commission of *One Act* of known, gross, and defiling *Immorality*, such as Intemperance or Debauchery — Profaneness or Impiety — Lying or Deceit — Fraud and Injustice. All which Things defile the Man — offend the natural Conscience — and are expressly prohibited, and condemned, by the Word of God. Now in Support of this, let it be considered,

1st) THAT this is the great End for which the Son of God came into our World, and the principal Design of his Religion, to preserve the Rising and following Generations, pure and uncorrupt. As for the Men of that wicked Generation, who had past the Days of Youth, and defiled themselves, before his Appearance; these are called upon to *repent, and turn to God — to put off, as concerning their former Conversation, the Old Man — to repent, and turn to God, and do Works meet for Repentance*. But the Children of Christian Parents, it is expected, should be an *holy Seed, an holy Generation, blameless and harmless, the Children of God without Rebuke*. Hence the Gospel is styled *the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation to all Men*. *ἡ σωτηρία πᾶσιν*. Under the Gospel-Dispensation are

Phil. ii.  
15.

Tit. ii. 11.

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2 Pet. i.

3, 4.

*given to us all Things that pertain unto Life and Godliness (or to a Godly Life) through the Knowledge of him, that hath called us to Glory and Virtue. Whereby are given to us, exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these, we may be Partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped (not repented of, but having escaped) the Corruption, that is in the World, through Lust.*

AND let us not look upon grown People only, as the Subjects of Christ's Kingdom. He said, *Suffer even little Children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They, as he observes, are both able and willing to learn his Religion, if suitably educated. Now as this is the primary and chief Design of Christ and his Religion, respecting After-Ages, to preserve Christians pure and uncorrupted from their Youth up, and to introduce a new Creation; the Kingdom of God here on Earth — So likewise,

2dly,) WE have Instances, many Instances upon Record, of young Persons who have thus *cleansed their Way, by taking Heed there-to according to God's Word.* And here permit me to instance *first*, in the Character of

our



our Saviour himself, the Leader and Perfecter of our Faith; who has left us an Example that we should follow his Steps. We are expressly told, that *whilst he was a CHILD, he grew and waxed strong in Spirit, — was filled with Wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him.* This whilst a CHILD. — And in what follows, we are told, that from the Time *he was TWELVE Years old, he began to be about his Father's Business* — made a more publick Enquiry after God and Religion — being found *in the Temple in the midst of the Doctors, or Teachers; not as yet taking upon him to teach them, but bearing them, and asking them Questions.* — That he continued still subject to his Parents, and hereby increased in Wisdom as in Age, or Stature, and in Favour both with God and Man. Read to the End of the Chapter at your Leisure. And let us not think, that whilst in this State, He was an Object too high for our Imitation. Great as his Glory, and high as his supreme Exaltation since, yet in his State of Humiliation here upon Earth, *He was made and tempted in all Things like as we are* — and passed through the several Stages of *Infancy, Childhood, and Youth,* be-

Luke ii.  
40.

Ver. 46,  
—49.

Ver. 51,  
52.

fore he arrived at *Manhood*, or entered upon his Messiahship, and this on Purpose, that he might leave us an Example that we may be directed and encouraged to follow his youthful Steps. His private Life and Conduct claims our Regard, as well as his publick Character and Ministry; though too little considered. Unless we admit and attend to this, we lose one chief Benefit and Design of his coming into our World. In him, We Christians, and *our Children*, have received the *Adoption of God's Children*, together with Assurances, that if we receive the Son of God as our Guide, and tread in his Steps, the same Favour and Grace of God will be with us, that was also with him, to the Purposes of spiritual Wisdom and Holiness, and that in *Childhood, Youth, and riper Years*; for the Promise, &c. is *to our Children*, — and the same God will be our God, and we shall be unto him for Sons and for Daughters; and at last, we shall be made Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ.

BUT this Instance of our Saviour in this his State of Humiliation here upon Earth, is not the only one upon Record. We have another,

another, allowed of by our Saviour himself; I mean the *Young Man*, who came running to him, kneeled down and asked him, *Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal Life.* Jesus said to him, *Thou knowest the Commandments, Do not commit adultery — do not kill — do not steal — do not bear false Witness — defraud not — honour thy Father and thy Mother.* — And the Young Man answered and said to him, *Master, all these Things have I kept from my Youth up.* Did our Saviour treat this as an *impossible Case*, or as a vain delusive Boast? No — but as a *probable and real Fact*, as appears from the Consequence — *Jesus beholding him, loved him*, and invited him into the Number of his special Followers and Favourites, as a thirteenth Apostle; which though he declined on Account of his great Possessions, yet it no Ways invalidates the former Testimony, that he had cleansed his Way, by taking Heed thereto, according to God's Word. A Youth, doubtless, may be very virtuous, pious, and good, who yet, like this lovely Youth, does not choose to quit a secular Life, with great Possessions, and take

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upon him the Ministerial Character and Profession.

NOR is this a singular Instance. *Paul* tells young *Timothy*, from a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus — Upon which he adds, All Scripture given by Inspiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. From whence it appears, that *Paul* looked upon this as nothing but the proper and natural Effect of true Religion, and of a good Education.

WE may count upon this as the general Character of young Christians, when Christianity is preached up and practised in all its Purity and Power; and received, as it was in this first Age, by Young Persons with the Spirit of new born Babes, desiring the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby. Yea, from the Manner in which *St. John* in his general Epistle, addresses himself to the Young Christians of that Age, one would conclude, he looked upon them in general, as Young Persons, who had cleansed their

their Way thus far in Life. *My little Children these Things I write unto you, that ye sin not. I write to you little Children, because your Sins are forgiven you, for his Name's Sake.* i. e. The very Mercy and Compassion of your Heavenly Father, ascertains the free Forgiveness of the little Failures and Infirmities of your Childhood. It follows, Ver. 13. *I write unto you Young Men, because ye have overcome the wicked One.* And in the next Verse, *I have written unto you Young Men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked One.*

NOR was this peculiar to the Apostolick Age — There have been many such Young Persons of both Sexes, I doubt not in every Age since, and are now in this our Day. It is no uncommon Thing for Persons to be cut off in the Days of their Youth, betwixt the Age of *twelve* and *twenty*. — And I doubt not, many of you have both heard of, and known such lovely Youths, when solemnly reflecting on their past Lives, under the near Prospect of Death and Eternity. — A Season, when we have all Reason to expect either Silence or Sincerity — I doubt not, you have  
heard

heard and known of such, as well as of Aged Servants of God, (and both prove the Point before us) who had the Testimony of a pure and good Conscience, *that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity*, they had had their Conversation in the World. Upon the whole, I comfortably hope, that several of You, both Men and Women, Old and Young, have a Witness in your own Breasts to this Truth, That it is both *possible* and *practicable*, for a Young Person to cleanse his Way, by taking Heed thereto, according to God's Word.

NOR should this be thought strange — It is far more strange, that Instances of foolish, corrupt, debauched Youths, should be so frequent; when we consider, how contrary all gross and shameful Immoralities are to the Natural Principles and Modesty of young Minds; insomuch that it is nothing but the abounding of Iniquity, together with the Force and Enticements of evil Examples and Companions, that can prevail upon the virtuous and pious Youth to break through the Restraints of his native Modesty, and Natural Conscience, and sell his *Innocence* for ever. This is the worst and hardest Act of his whole Life.



3.) I ADD, That if it be possible for Man at any Age to *cleanse his Way*, it must be so in his *Youth*, before his Nature be corrupted, and vicious Habits contracted by Use and Practice.

CERTAINLY it is much easier to *refrain*, than to *reform*,—and consequently much easier for the innocent Youth, than for the Old Inveterate Sinner. The Youth has more Power and Command of himself, and of his natural Appetites and Passions. — He is not *enslaved*, but *free*. — And has far more Reason to expect the Blessing and Assistance of God, who *to the Pure will shew himself pure; but to the Froward will shew himself froward*. — And with God — with the Blessing and Assistance of God, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. *Up and be doing, and God will be with you.*

Psal. xviii.  
26.

RESERVING the Directions, given in my Text, to be considered afterwards, I shall conclude at present with mixing some Extracts from Mr. *Hale's golden Remains*. In his Sermon upon *Psal. xxxix. 1. I said* (or resolved) *I will take Heed to my Ways*, having put the Question, “ But are we *able* to take up this “ Resolution ?” He answers, “ Here I must  
“ confess

“ confess I am in a strait — if I should say,  
 “ we are *able* — and the Thing is possible,  
 “ whether *I should offend the Truth*, I can-  
 “ not so easily pronounce — but sure I am,  
 “ *I should offend the Times*. For many can  
 “ delight themselves in discoursing of the  
 “ *Weakness* of Man’s Nature — of the *Diffi-*  
 “ *culty* — yea, *Impossibility* of keeping the  
 “ Laws of God. And again, should I say,  
 “ that we are bound and commanded to take  
 “ up this *Resolution, I will take Heed to, and*  
 “ *cleanse my Way*; but to do it with *Reser-*  
 “ *vation*, that in this Life we can never be  
 “ able to make it good. I do not see, what  
 “ I could do more to dishearten and deter  
 “ Men from this Lesson of *Christian Reso-*  
 “ *lution*, which above all Lessons in the  
 “ World I would have recommended to  
 “ them. For what wise Man will attempt,  
 “ what he knows before-hand, or verily be-  
 “ lieves to be *impossible*.”

HOWEVER, in this Case, you have not  
 only the *Command* of God, but you have  
 Encouragement enough seriously to set about  
 this greatest and best Work. I call upon  
 you as the Angel in the *Revelations*, COME  
 AND SEE — come and try — and let *Expe-*  
*rience*

rience determine ; For many Things have been thought *impossible*, till Experience has proved them *possible*.

“ IT is observed by those, who have wrote “ the *Acts* of *Alexander* the Great, that he “ enterprized many Things with Success, “ which no other Man would have attempted, doubting the Possibility of the Enter- “ prize.” Do you like Young *Alexander*, attempt Impossibilities in so great and good a Cause. — Experience will discover that to be *possible*, which Indolence and Fear represent as impracticable.

“ POSSUNT quia posse videntur. They “ are poor *Discoverers*, who think there is “ *no* Land, where they can see nothing but “ *Sea*.” How many venture their Lives and Fortunes, yea, their ALL, amidst the Dangers of Rocks, Storms, and Tempests, and compass Sea and Land in Quest of Gain, where they have no Assurance of Success. But how much better, easier, and surer Adventure is this, whereof I now treat — in which if we succeed, the Profit is Infinite, and the Honour Immortal. — And should we fail in lesser Articles, the very missing  
of

of it cannot be without a great and rich Return.

“WE read of a Father, who on his  
 “ Death-Bed, commanded his Sons to dig  
 “ in his Vineyard, where they might find  
 “ much Gold. They did so. — Gold they  
 “ found none. — But by digging and mov-  
 “ ing the Earth about the Roots of the  
 “ Vines, they became richly fruitful, and  
 “ produced Gold. Now, what if God do  
 “ so by us?” Commanding us to dig for  
*hidden Treasure* — for *the Pearl of great*  
*Price* — *the one Thing needful* — by taking  
 Heed to our Ways, according to his Word;  
 though he knows we shall commit many ex-  
 cusable Errors and Mistakes, like the young  
 Scholar, whilst attempting to imitate the fair-  
 est Copy; yet the Labour and Watchfulness  
 itself, cannot but prove of infinite Benefit.  
 Our very *Endeavours* of this Kind, are high-  
 ly acceptable with God, and beneficial to  
 ourselves. He that by striving to avoid All  
 Sin, has avoided most, and all the greatest;  
 — and by endeavouring to keep All the  
 Commandments of God, has kept the first  
 and great Commandments of all, *from his*  
*Youth up*. — This Man has gained an infinite  
 Prize.

Prize. He has cleansed himself from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and is in the Way to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, and grow up to be a *perfect Man — unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.* Go then, and *work in God's Vineyard, and whatever is right he will give you.* — There every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour; for God never said to any of the Seed of Jacob, *seek ye me in vain.* I love them that love me, says God and Wisdom, and he that seeketh me early shall find me.

It is nothing but the Want of Trial and Experience, that leaves this Point of Possibility doubtful, which is not to be determined to any good Purpose without a fair Trial. — For what does it signify to know the Possibility afore-hand, unless we are willing, desirous, and determined to act upon it? Here let it be considered, that to make this Trial, requires *all your Power — all your Will — and all your Heart.* Some perhaps do their best in some Instances; but in others they are utterly *careless and defective.* — But shew me the Man who has made Trial of the utmost of his Strength, in the Service  
of

of God — And who can tell, what the Issue might be, if that *were done*, which as yet was *never done*? There is no knowing this without Trial. But certainly we have Evidence and Encouragement enough at present, to make the Attempt — far more in this Case, than in any other. Yea, I will venture to say, that if Men were but willing properly to set about it, they have more Assurance of Success Here, than in any one Thing they undertake besides. “A great Part of our Life and Time is took up in attempting *Impossibilities*.” — And in other Cases we act upon no absolute *Certainty*. — “We would want nothing — we would never be troubled, nor be sick, nor die — this all desire; — But this is *impossible*. “Why do not we much more desire *not to sin* — which is the chief Cause of all our Want, Trouble, Sicknes, and Death. “Amidst therefore so many *Difficulties*, and so many *Impossibilities*, that we undertake for our own Fancy,” let us undertake this, *to cleanse our Way*; which if enterprized with Sincerity, by *taking Heed to our Ways according to God's Word*, will be found to have the least Difficulty in it, and the greatest Reward.



Reward. Would you *Young Men* be at half the Pains to *preserve* your Virtue, that foolish Youths are at to lose it, to destroy their *native Modesty*, and make Provision for the Gratification of their Lusts, you would secure your End. Supposing it as difficult for the debauched habitual Sinner *to cleanse his Way*, as it is for the *Ethiopian to change his Skin*, or the *Leopard his Spots*, it is not so with you, who have not yet *been accustomed to do Evil*. And may God mercifully grant, that this never come to be your unhappy Case. — But all Prayer for you will be to no Purpose, and all Prayers, Wishes, and Desires of your own, unless you attend to the Means and Method directed to in my Text. But this must be the Subject of my next Discourse, wherein *I shall commend you*, as I do at present, *to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them, which are sanctified.*



# S E R M O N    V.

The YOUNG MAN must *take Heed*  
to his Ways.



PSALM cxix. 9.

*Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his  
Way? By taking Heed thereto, according  
to thy Word.*

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*I* N a former Discourse, I have  
considered the serious and impor-  
tant Question proposed in my  
Text; *Wherewith shall a Young  
Man cleanse his Way?* I now proceed to the  
plain and full Answer which is here given to  
it; being the next Thing which I proposed.

IV. IF a young Man would cleanse his  
Way, *He must take Heed to his Way,  
according to God's Word.*

THIS

THIS I think, is the plainest Directory, and best Advice, that can possibly be given in so few Words. We cannot expect that this great and good End can be obtained, without the careful Use of proper *Means*. *He that striveth for this Mastery, will not be crowned, unless he strive lawfully.* And if any Thing can claim and deserve your prudent Care and diligent Endeavours, doubtless it is this, to keep yourselves unspotted, and escape the Pollutions which are in the World through Lust and Sin. Now the Advice here given to the *Young Man*, consists of these two Parts, which are very distinct in their Nature, but of equal Importance and Necessity.

I. HE must *take Heed to his Way.* And

II. HE must do this *according to God's Word.*

I. HE must *take Heed to his Way.* This evidently implies, that the Youth has it in his Power to do something towards cleansing his own Way; and this is expected, and required from him. He must be cautious and careful — he must be sober-minded and se-

rious — he must live circumspectly, and take Heed. — Without this, all that can be said to him, and done for him, will be to no Purpose. Without this, the Grace of God, and the Advice of his Friends, will be all in vain. If he have it not in his Power, in and of himself, to direct and cleanse his own Way, yet he has it in his own Power, to *take Heed* to it; and if he do this, all needful Assistance will be granted. The Young Man; who thus walketh uprightly, walketh surely; for whilst God resisteth the Proud and Presumptuous, he giveth Grace unto the Humble.

THE Necessity of this Advice, arises from these two Things; the Dangers and Temptations, that constantly lye in his Way — And the general Rashness, and fearless Precipitancy of Youth. This latter is too well known to be his Natural Temper, and the former his State and Condition; though he knows little of it himself. His Friends are often in Fear and Pain for him, when he is in none for himself. Having experienced so few of the Dangers of Life, he fears none; neither those incident to his *Soul*, nor to his *Body*. And if a timely Caution cannot be awakened

*must take Heed to his Ways.*

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awakened by prudent Advice, sad Experience will convince him of his Danger, when it is too late; when he *eats the Fruit of his own Ways, and is filled with his own Devices* — When *his Fear cometh as Desolation, and his Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind* — when *Distress and Anguish cometh upon him; then shall he call, but Wisdom will not answer* — he shall seek her early, but shall not find her; for that he *hated Knowledge, and would none of her Counsel, but despised all her Reproof.*

Prov. i.  
24—31.

BUT if nothing but *Experience* can convince you of your Danger, and make you cautious and prudent, be prevailed with to learn this from others, and not from yourselves. This doubtless is the cheapest Way of buying Experience. Would to God, there were no such Examples set before you; but; alas! our Neighbourhood abounds with them; exhibiting before the Eyes of Young Persons, Numbers of such sad Spectacles, as one would think could not fail to awake their Fears, to rouse their Caution, and confirm their good Resolutions, more than all the Precepts and Instructions in the World.

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This is the only good Use that can be made of such Monuments of youthful Folly.

BUT how monstrous is it to set before yourselves such Examples for your Imitation, and choose such for your Friends and Companions, whom you behold defiled with Sin—infected with Vice—enslaved by Lusts—covered over with Shame—plunged in Ruin and Perdition—lost to the World, and to every good Work reprobate. These, but a few Years since, were pleasing Youths; but through Want of that Caution, which I am recommending, are now *lost*—and without bitter and timely Repentance, are *lost for ever*.

THIS Sense of your Danger, productive of its proper Fear and Caution, is the *first* Principle of Wisdom and Safety, without which, the Youth goeth to his own Destruction, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; or as the silly Bird hasteneth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life. Know then, that youthful Ways are slippery Ways—know that fearless Presumption has slain its thousands, yea, its ten thousands. But *be that*

Prov. vii.  
23, 23.



*must take Heed to his Ways.*

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*that hearkeneth to Wisdom shall dwell safely,  
and shall be quiet from Fear of Evil.*

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Prov. i.

33.

THIS serious Apprehension of his own Danger, is the first Principle pre-requisite to a Young Man's taking Heed to his Ways. But wherein this Heedfulness itself consists, still remains, and comes now to be considered. And let me tell you it lies in two Things.

FIRST, in making it your settled *Purpose and Resolution* to labour for the Preservation of your own *Innocence*, by keeping yourselves unspotted from the World, and living a sober, righteous, and godly Life. This you must propose as your *high End*, esteeming it at once your Duty and Happiness. And then, SECONDLY: You must pursue this by the careful and constant Observance of all proper *Means*. This is *to take Heed to your Ways* — it is *to live circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise, redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil.*

THE Case with too many Young Persons, and what lays the *first* Foundation of their Ruin, is this, *They aim at Nothing* — They have no settled Principles or Designs, nor any one grand or governing *End* in view — mere

Vanity is bound up in their Hearts — They swim with every Stream — hastily follow every vain Thought that starts up in their Minds ; and fall in with every idle Companion, that Accident throws in their Way. It is not Reason, nor Judgment, nor Conscience, the Manly and distinguishing Powers of their Nature, that they attend to, as their Guide and Director ; but merely such Animal Appetites and Senses, as they have in common with inferior Creatures. This is the Case, when the *Young Man rejoices himself in the Days of his Youth, walking in the Ways of his own Heart, and in the Sight of his own Eyes ; not knowing that for all this God will call him into Judgment.* From whence it follows, as in the next Verse, *Childhood and Youth are both Vanity.* They seldom, if ever, look up to God, and think, What is it that I was made for ? Wherefore is my Life spared ? Or what doth the Lord God require of me ? Much less do they form any Purposes at all of governing themselves according to God's Word. They never seriously look forward to Death and Judgment, and ask themselves, What Preparation they are making against these awful Events, that  
are

are most certainly awaiting them? They esteem themselves too young to think on these Things; and the Events at too great a Distance; though they see and know, that such Youths as they, die daily as well as others. Their Thoughts are took up about the present Life and World: But then they neglect to look forward, even to *this Life*; and ask themselves, What Preparation they are making for Comfort and Usefulness, when they come to be Men? As they hope to be in a few Years. In short, they have no *End* in view at all, relating either to this World or another. It is as little their Concern, How they may enter upon approaching Manhood with Credit and Reputation, — fill the Manly Station with Dignity and Usefulness, and pass through this Life with Comfort and Happiness; I say, this is as little their Concern, as How they may become meet for the future Life and World. For in Truth, this Life and the next are so nearly connected — the *present* being our State of Preparation for the *future*, that the self-same Method of Life in the Days of Youth, is equally preparatory for *both Worlds*.

BUT

BUT alas! Too many Youths have no future Prospects or Designs at all. All their Concern is, to please their Fancy — gratify their Vanity — and indulge their present Appetites; regardless of the destructive Consequences, that must follow, both in this Life, and the next. Such vain young Minds, sail through the Storms and Dangers of Life, like a Ship in the Sea without Pilot or Ballast, liable to be carried about with every Wind of Temptation.

THIS thoughtless, undesigning Folly is the Forerunner of still greater Evil and Wickedness. This lays them constantly open to the full Force of every Temptation, and leaves them an easy Prey to every wicked Companion. Hence it soon follows, that their Minds become seduced by evil Thoughts; their Imaginations defiled; their Wills enslaved, and their Affections entangled. From this Time the Youth may date his Ruin; for *Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin; and Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.*

James i.  
15.

FROM this Time it can no longer be said, the Youth has formed to himself no Purposes or Designs. Now he has his main  
and

and governing Thoughts and Contrivances : not how to *cleanse his Way*, but how to defile it. From this Time, the *Innocence* of his Mind is lost, and his Soul become guilty before God. Whilst thus *inwardly* longing, and contriving how to commit Sin, *he has committed the Sin already in his Heart*. He privately seeks, and impatiently longs for Opportunities to gratify his shameful and irregular Appetites. His inward Struggles are, how to break through the natural Restraints of *Youthful Modesty* — how to evade the Knowledge of the World — how to cast off the Force of Parental Authority, and friendly Instruction — and how to overcome the inward Remonstrances of his own Conscience. This is *hard Work*; whilst the Youth is laying violent Hands upon himself, and deliberately murdering his own Soul, and all his best Comforts. Speaking of this very Case, the first Seduction of such simple Youths, it is said, *Their Feet run to Evil, and make haste to shed Blood; They lay wait for their own Blood, and lurk privily for their own Lives.*

Prov. i.  
16, 18.

No Wonder such Youths as these are overcome, who instead of *taking Heed to their Ways*,

Ways, how to *avoid* Sin, and withstand Temptations — instead of pursuing Wisdom and Goodness as their chief Happiness ; on the contrary, their whole Aim and Pursuit is, how to sacrifice their Innocence to sinful Gratifications. I say, no Wonder such are overcome — Their Case no Ways disproves the Possibility of such Youths cleansing their Way, who *take Heed thereto according to God's Word*. On the contrary, it is hard Work for the modest Youth to lose his Innocence. And I am satisfied, there are few Instances of such being betrayed into any gross defiling Immoralities, who have not long before been *privately* meditating and contriving such sinful Gratifications. And if so, the Young Man is always safe, so long as he *takes Heed to his Way according to God's Word* ; making it his principal Aim — and looking upon it as his chief Duty and Happiness, to preserve his Innocence, and order his Conversation aright. This he must regard as the *One Thing needful* — the *Pearl of Great Price* — his Honour — his Crown — his Glory — yea, his Life. Whilst this is the inward Frame and Purpose of his Soul,

his



*must take Heed to his Ways.*

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*his Heart is right with God, out of which are the Issues of Life.*

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Prov. iv.

23.  
Prov. ii.  
begin.

ACCORDINGLY this is the Advice the Wise Man gives to his Son. *My Son, if thou wilt receive my Words, and hide my Commandments with thee, so that thou incline thy Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thine Heart to Understanding — If thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her as for hid Treasures ; Then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God — Then shalt thou understand Righteousness and Judgment, and Equity, yea, every good Path. And farther to shew both the Necessity and Safety of this good Heart and Intention, he adds, Ver. 10. My Son, when Wisdom entereth into thine Heart, and Knowledge is pleasant to thy Soul, Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee, that thou mayest escape every Tempter, walk in the Way of good Men, and keep the Paths of the Righteous. And to heighten his Childrens Regard for Goodness, he tells them, how his Father advised him when a Youth — He taught me, and said to me, Let thy Heart retain my Words—keep my Commandments and live — Get Wisdom, get Understanding, forget it not, neither decline*

Prov. iv.  
4—11.

*cline from the Words of my Mouth — forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee, love her and she shall keep thee. — My Son; Wisdom is the principal Thing; therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy Getting get Understanding — exalt her and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to Honour when thou dost embrace her — she shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace, a Crown of Glory shall she deliver unto thee. When thou goest, thy Steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. — Take fast Hold of Instruction, let her not go — keep her; for she is thy Life.*

HERE the Promises of Safety are made to the Young Man, in Case he thus *take Heed to his Way*, by proposing this as his main *End* to secure his *Innocence*, and live a *sober, righteous, and godly Life*. But then he must pursue this *End* in the Use of proper *Means*, and Observance of the best *Helps* and *Advantages*, that God affords him. Accordingly,

SECONDLY, my next Business is to observe to you, *What these Means and Helps are*. Here I know, some would be for sending the Youth to consult the Dictates of his

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*must take Heed to his Ways.*

III

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V.

own Reason — to meditate the Beauties of Virtue, and the Deformity of Vice. — And in order to this, to study those Moralists, that have painted these Images in the most lively Colours ; in Hopes thus to sooth, and charm the Youth into a Love of Virtue.

OTHERS would direct him still to follow the Guidance of his Parents or Friends, without thinking for himself. Now I am not for setting aside these, and such Methods, when I freely declare, that I look upon them all, as weak and ineffectual of themselves, without a due Regard to the Authority, and WORD OF GOD ; which enjoins and comprehends them all. This is what my Text directs to, *Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his Way? By taking Heed thereto, according to GOD's WORD.*

BUT not having Time at present to enlarge upon this Branch of Advice, I shall reserve it to another Opportunity. And conclude at present, by putting you upon recollecting the Design of what has been already offered — which is this, and this only, to shew the YOUNG MAN, *What it is to take Heed to his Way* ; and the *Necessity* that lies upon him to do this ; if he would secure  
the

the Favour of God — preserve his Innocence through the Days of his Youth — and arrive at Manhood with Dignity and Happiness, he must propose this to himself, as his main *End*, and resolve to pursue it as his Duty and Happiness — behaving with all Care and Circumspection. This is the *first* Beginning of Wisdom, and the *first* Principle of the *Divine Life*. The Youth that has no fixed deliberate Design, has no Principle in him at all. The Youth that has once conceived an Inclination to, and Hankering after Sin and Wickedness, is in the direct Road to Ruin. It cannot be said of him, that he *takes Heed to his Way*; but the contrary. His *Heart* is already defiled, and nothing can be expected, but his *Life and Character* will be defiled soon. This Youth is *carnally-minded*, which is *Death*. But the Youth who has in him a *settled Purpose* to *cleanse his Way*, and actually behaves himself with Religious Care and Circumspection, this Youth is *spiritually-minded*, which is *Life and Peace*. In him the *Divine Life* is begun. In him, there is *found some good Thing towards God*. In him there is the *first* Principle of Wisdom and Goodness; namely,

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*must take Heed to his Ways.*

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a due Care and Concern to preserve his Innocence and Virtue, and *grow in Favour both with God and Man.* And whilst the Youth is thus concerned to do his Part, in working out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, God will *work in him both to will, and to do, of his own good Pleasure.* He that has begun this good Work in him, will doubtless perfect it to the Day of his compleat Redemption, whilst this Spirit is cherished in his Soul.

*BE not deceived, God is not mocked, for what a Young Man soweth, that shall he also reap. — He that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.*





# S E R M O N VI.


Personal Care without a Principle  
of PIETY insufficient.



PSALM CXIX. 9.

*Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his  
Way? By taking Heed thereto, according  
to thy Word.*

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 I N Answer to this important Que-  
stion, *Wherewith shall a Young  
Man cleanse his Way?* My Text  
tells us,

- I. THAT *He must take Heed to his Way.*  
And,
- II. HE *must do this according to God's  
Word.*

THE FORMER of these I have already  
considered, and now proceed to the SE-  
COND ;



COND ; which obviously contains these two Things ;

1.) THAT the Young Man must cultivate and preserve in his Mind, an early and constant *Regard for God* ; making *this* the governing Principle of his Heart and Life.

2.) HE must set before himself the WORD OF GOD, as his Rule and Guide — constantly endeavouring to form his *Temper*, and regulate all his *Actions*, according to the *Rules* and *Directions* therein contained.

1st.) THE Young Man, who would *cleanse his Way*, must cultivate and preserve in his Mind an early and constant *Regard for God*, making *this* the governing Principle of his Heart and Life. *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth*, is the Advice of the Wise Man — and good Advice it is. Without this, as in the preceding Verses, *the Young Man walks in the Ways of his own Heart, and in the Sight of his own Eyes*. A most dangerous State this, when the rash and unexperienced Youth, hath neither the *Law of God in his Heart*, nor *the Fear of God before his Eyes*. See *Eccles. xi. 9.*

*Eccles. xii. 1.*

SOLOMON tells his Son, *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom*. — And

*Prov. i. 7.*

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Genesis  
xxxix. 9.

doubtless it is so. Then only we begin to be wise, when we begin to know and Fear God. This Principle of Piety — this due Regard for God, that causes us to *stand in Awe of God and not sin*, is the first and grand Principle of Wisdom and Goodness. There is no other that has Authority sufficient to give Law to the Human Mind, and command Obedience in *all* Circumstances of Trial and Temptation. But this *Regard for God*, is that *Faith that purifies the Heart, and gives us the Victory over the World*. You may see both its Nature and Power in Joseph's reply to his tempting Mistress, *How then can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?*

THIS Principle of Piety settled in the Soul, represents God as always present, and acquainted with all our most secret Thoughts and hidden Actions — not as an unconcerned Spectator, but of *purser Eyes than to behold the least Sin with Approbation* — who is the Lord and Governor of the World, that will *cause every one to find according to his Ways*. Since the composing and preaching of this Sermon, has been published by Bishop Hoadly, the following Remark, direct to the Purpose

Purpose of my Argument. ‘ In such a  
‘ World as ours, with such a Nature as  
‘ Man, surrounded with so many and great  
‘ Temptations, who would not wish to be  
‘ under the Influence of a *Motive*, which  
‘ may preserve the Dignity of his Nature, at  
‘ the same Time that it guards his Innocence,  
‘ and increases his Virtue? In every Age and  
‘ Circumstance of Life, as we pass forward  
‘ we more and more want the friendly As-  
‘ sistance of such a Motive. The Innocence  
‘ of Childhood quickly vanishes, and is suc-  
‘ ceeded by the Voluptuousness of Youth —  
‘ In this Age a Torrent of ungoverned Pas-  
‘ sions often threatens to carry all before it.  
‘ In more advanced Years, the Pursuits of  
‘ Ambition — the Lust of Power and Ad-  
‘ vancement take Place, not without Dan-  
‘ ger of the Man’s changing Truth, Sinceri-  
‘ ty and Honesty for Art, Dissimulation and  
‘ Deceit. — And even in Old Age, the Pow-  
‘ er of Avarice often shews itself in a Man-  
‘ ner too absurd to be described.’ — This is  
the general State of Man in our World ;  
upon which the Young Man is now entering,  
and how can he hope to cleanse his Way,  
but by cherishing an early, constant, and

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lively Principle of Piety, and due Regard to God? This is equal to it; but nothing besides.

THE Authority of Men can reach and restrain no farther than the outward and open Actions. It cannot take Cognizance of the secret Works of Darkneſs, much leſs of the Purpoſes, Deſires, and Contrivances of the Heart; which if not timely ſuppreſſed, will become too powerful to be reſtrained by any Terrors whatever.

A YOUNG Man therefore may be corrupted before the Authority of Parent or Friend can interpoſe. But the Preſence of God is every where — *He ſearches the Heart, and tries the Reins of the Children of Men.* —

Job xxxiv.  
21, 22. *There is no Darkneſs nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves. There is no Authority but that of God, that can extend its Preſence into all Places, and reach forth its Influence at all Times, ſufficient to ſecure the Innocence of the Life, and the Purity of the Heart. But true Piety in its Purity and Perfection will effectually reſtrain from all Appearance of Evil, as well in Private as in Publick. — For as Darkneſs and Light are both alike to God;*

God; so are they to the pious Mind. *The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.*

But, though Human Authority appears thus insufficient, yet possibly the Youth or Young Man may think and be encouraged by some to think, that *his own Powers are of themselves, abundantly sufficient* — that his own Reason and Conscience is a Guide sufficient to direct him, how he ought to act — and his own Will, and private Resolution will supply him with sufficient Ability and Strength, without the Aids of Divine Piety — especially if he do but *take Heed to his Way* — that is enough. If I wanted to ruin Youth, this is the very Direction I would give them.

THE Wise Man was of my Opinion, when he gives his Son that pious and good Advice, MY SON, *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Understanding. — In all thy Ways acknowledge HIM, and HE shall direct thy Paths. — Be not wise in thine own Eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from Evil.*

Prov. iii.  
5.

I KNOW it is the Foible of young and unexperienced Minds, to fancy themselves *self-sufficient*. This was the Case of our *first*

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Gen. ii. 5.

Pfal. ciii.  
29.

*Parents* in the Days of their Youth—and has been so with all their Descendents, in their first Entrance upon Life. They affected to be *as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*. This vain Temper first introduced *Sin* and *Ruin*; and never fails to produce the like pernicious Effects. Whereas it is the Prerogative of God to be *self-sufficient*; capable of directing and determining himself, always to do that which is right; without paying Regard to any superior Will or Authority, and being uninfluenced either by Hopes or Fears: But this cannot be the Case with any *imperfect dependent Creature*. The *Angels that excel in Strength*, we are told, *do God's Commandments, bearkening to the Voice of his Word*. Yea, the Son of God, when here upon Earth, made in the Likeness of Man, and tempted as we are, He cleansed his Way, and maintained his Purity by Means of this *Sacred Principle*—bearing and cherishing in his Mind a perpetual Regard to the Will and Authority of God his Father. This appears from the whole of his History—from his Prayers and Devotion—and from express Declarations, too many to be mentioned. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,*  
and



*and him only shalt thou serve. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak — Lo! I come, to do thy Will, O God, thy Law is in my Heart.* How foolish and presumptuous then that Man, whether *Young or Old*, who vainly imagines, he can *cleanse his Way* without a pious Regard to the Will and Authority of God.

BUT there is no Need of rational Arguments to prove, that Mankind will not be governed without Anthority. The Experience of the whole World proves it, and has provided accordingly. What would the State of Things be, if no Laws or Authority were established; but every Man was left to do what he pleased? Though in this Case, Men would occasionally do what was right, when under no Temptation to the contrary, yet would they be sure to act just as present Humour—private Inclination—sensual Appetite—or worldly Passion happened to sway or dictate. Yea, when Fancy, Appetite, or Passion, grows Head-strong, How little do the wisest Reasons — the most prudent Counsels — and the most affectionate Exhortations, signify without *Authority* to restrain, and enforce Obedience? As one says, ‘ Try the Experiment where you please —  
‘ in

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‘ in Kingdoms — in Armies — or in private  
 ‘ Families, respecting Children and Servants,  
 ‘ and you will find, it is a due Regard to  
 ‘ Authority, and not mere unarmed Reason,  
 ‘ that governs, restrains, and determines.  
 ‘ An Authority that can punish Disobedience,  
 ‘ may command Submission; and an Au-  
 ‘ thority that can reward Virtue, may concii-  
 ‘ liate Love and Obedience.’ — But whatever  
 Authority mere Reason has over virtuous and  
 ingenuous Minds, which at best is found  
 but precarious, and no more than every  
 Man’s own occasional Humour and private  
 Opinions will allow it; yet the Authority  
 of both Reason and Conscience is despised  
 by Lust, and trampled upon by Passion. —  
 And consequently those Moralists, that have  
 wrote purposely to recommend the Power  
 and Guidance of our Reason, are forced to  
 confess it Weakness and Insufficiency, to re-  
 form the *vicious* — to restrain the *giddy* —  
 and to secure the Virtue of the *young* and *un-*  
*experienced*. Here they grant, the *Authority*  
*of God* must be called in, as Lord and Judge  
 of the whole World; and the Prospects of  
 an awful future Judgment must be kept up  
 in the Mind.

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I HAVE dwelt the longer upon this Point, as I judge it of the highest Importance. Would a YOUNG MAN secure his Virtue, and *cleanse his Way*, he must not only *take Heed to his Way*, exerting all the Prudence and Power that he is naturally possessed of; but he must cherish and cultivate in his Mind an early and constant Regard for God; and the true Spirit of Piety must be the governing Principle of his Heart and Life. Without this, his Virtue and Innocence will always be left defenceless — in a precarious and uncertain State — liable to be wrested from him by such Temptations, as often and easily beset him. If he have not *the Fear of God before his Eyes, and the Love of God in his Heart*, like *Sampson*, when he had lost his *great Strength*, he will be *weak and like other Men* — like those many Youths, whom we daily see seduced and led Captive by Sin and Folly. But the Spirit of true genuine Piety is the *Seed of Regeneration*; whereby a Man is *born from above*; and whilst this *Seed remaineth in him*, he cannot — he will not — he *dare* not, commit any gross or known Sin, because *he is born of God*. Thus 1 John iii. 9. St. John, *We know, that whosoever is born*  
of

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1 John v.  
4, 18.

*of God sinneth not ; but keepeth himself, and the Wicked One toucheth him not. And again, Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the World ; and this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our FAITH. Thus in Eph. vi. 11, &c. in order to withstand in the Day of Temptation, we are bid to be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might — putting on the whole Armour of God ; described as consisting in an upright Heart and honest Intention — But above (or over) all these take the Shield of Faith — the Helmet of Salvation — and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God — praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit — and watching thereunto with all Perseverance. By which Faith, Hope and Prayer, is intended this lively Spirit of sincere Piety which I am recommending. — A Principle of more Importance and Use in the Divine Life — to instruct — restrain — and excite, than the best natural Parts and Powers — The largest Stock of acquired Knowledge — The best Instructions of Parents or Ministers — Or even the best Intentions and Purposes of a Man's own Mind ; without this true Spirit of Piety and Regard for God.*

FROM

FROM these Passages, and hundreds that might be mentioned, it is evident, that in the Holy Scriptures, the Prevention of Vice, and the Preservation of our Virtue and Purity, is always ascribed to the Power of this Divine Principle and Spirit of Piety; supposing that no other Power is sufficient for this Purpose — directing us to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, by perfecting Holiness in the FEAR OF GOD — Commending us to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an Inheritance among them that are sanctified.* I say, the *Holy Scriptures* recommend this pious Regard to God, supposing no other Principle or Power is a sufficient Preservative without it.

2 Cor. vii.  
1.

Acts xx.  
32.

SOME perhaps, may be ready to suspect, *No, Nor with it* — asking in Proof of this, “If we have not frequent Instances of Persons of renowned Piety and Regard for God, who have been seduced into very gross Sins?” To which I answer, This sad Truth is undeniable. But still I deny the Conclusion, that such Persons would draw from such melancholy Instances. — For they do not prove the Weakness of this  
*Divine*

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*Divine Principle ; But the Weakness of the Persons who seemed possessed of it. Were such Cases fully known, I doubt not it would be found, that these Persons lost or abated of their Piety and Regard to God, if ever they were possessed of it, before their Piety and their God deserted them. And, if this be the Case, instead of shewing the Weakness of true Piety, it shews its absolute Necessity ; and the Weakness of Man without it. Whereas, true Piety, whilst it continues, and is duly cherished, never faileth, but is able to support the pure and pious Soul under all Sufferings, and all Temptations. Whenever it has been duly cherished, it has set Men above all the Terrors and Allurements of the World. — Has stopped the Mouths of Lions — quenched the Violence of Fire — out of Weakness has made strong — some have been tortured, not accepting Deliverance — others have endured Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings—of Bonds and Imprisonments; been destitute, afflicted, tormented. In one Word, difficult as it is, yet with God all Things are possible. Where you are weak in yourselves, you are strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. His Grace is sufficient for you,*  
and

Heb. xi.  
33—38.



*a Principle of Piety insufficient.*

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*and his Strength will be made perfect in your Weakness.*

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I SCARCE know how to leave this Point, which is of such vast Importance, and which *young Minds* are so little acquainted with. Though I have said so much to recommend the Pursuit of true Piety, yet this is but a small Share of what might be farther offered. However what has been said is sufficient to ground the following Address upon, with which I shall conclude.

MY young dear Friends — my single Design this Day, has been to put you upon cultivating early, and preserving constantly, a serious and pious Frame of Spirit, arising from a due Regard to God; and making this the governing Principle of your Heart and Life. In my last Discourse I endeavoured to rouse up all your own Powers and Caution — To this I have now, agreeably to my Text, and to the whole Tenor of Scripture, been exhorting you to call in the superadded Aids of Piety and Religion. — Without which, all your Powers will be found Weakness — and all your Purposes *unstable as Water*; and mutable as the Will, Temper, and Passions of Man. It is not a trifling Matter  
that

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that I have been recommending to you this Day — No — *It is your Life* — The Life of your *Souls* depends upon it — The Security of your Innocence — The Maintenance of your Character — Yea, your Ease — your Honour and your Happiness ; both for Time and Eternity.

You are now going to enter, or are newly entered, upon Life, under your own Conduct and Guidance. Hitherto you have been under the Eye and Care of your Parents, or under Governors and Tutors: But now Business calls you out into the World from under their Care — And your Age begins to emancipate and discharge you from their former Authority and Controul. The Faculties God has now blessed you with, discharge your Parents from a great Part of the Care and Trust, that *was* vested in them ; which *now* devolves upon Yourselves. Hitherto your Parents and Tutors have, or ought to have *took Heed to your Ways* — But now you must *take Heed for yourselves*. They cannot indeed be unconcerned for you — yea, their Concern is doubled and encreased. Nor ought their Authority to be wholly cast off, nor their Advice despised. — But you  
are

are not willing they should, nor are they able to attend and care for you, as in your Infant and Former State. You must, and will undertake for yourselves — The Time is at Hand, that you have long been wishing for.

BUT what, Will you — dare you, go forth, and rush into this World of Snares, of Sins, and Follies, without any Guide and Director — without any Head or Authority over you? If you do, it must be a Wonder indeed — yea, the greatest of Wonders, if you escape Sin and Folly.

IT is an awful Scene for a Youth to leave his Father's House, and go forth into a new, strange, unknown World. Few can bear this Parting without affecting Tears. But how much more affecting would it be to the Youth, did he know and consider, what a Trust is devolved upon him, in being left to *take Heed to Himself, and to his own Ways.*

To such, to all such Young Persons, God speaks in the awful and endearing Language of the Prophet, *Wilt thou not from this Time cry unto me, my Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth.* God is willing to be so. —

Jer. iii. 4.

*The Father of the Fatherless — The Guide of the Youth. Draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to you. When Father or Mother forsake you, or you leave them, God is willing and ready to take you up — to be a Father to you, and you shall be unto him for Sons and for Daughters. They that seek him early shall find him. Be it known to you, my Young Friends, you stand in special Need of the Authority of God; to sway in your Minds; and of the Spirit of Piety to keep your Hearts.*

I HAVE observed to you before, that *Man-kind will not be governed without Authority.* And if the Authority of God your Heavenly Father do not succeed, and take place in your Minds, in Proportion as the Authority of your Earthly Parents is relaxed or withdrawn, you are deserted and left to yourselves, in a State the most forlorn and dangerous, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I therefore repeat it again, *Wilt thou not from this Time cry unto God, MY FATHER, Thou art the Guide of my Youth.* Without this, all your Parents Hopes are defeated — their former Instructions vain — and their whole Labour  
lost

lost ; if you do not now conceive a greater Regard to the Eye and Authority of your Heavenly Father, in the Days of your Youth, than you did for *theirs* in the Days of your Childhood. O say to him, *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee, my Father's God, and I will exalt thee. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth to be desired besides thee. Lo, they that are far from thee, shall perish ; but it is good for me to draw near to God.*

O THAT I could prevail with you this Day, to choose God for your God — for the Guide of your Youth, and the Guardian of your Life. From hence forward, *sanctify the Lord God in your Hearts — Let his Fear be before your Eyes continually — Remember your Creator in these the Days of your Youth. Learn to stand in Awe of God, and not Sin. Let him be the Object of your frequent and most serious Thoughts both by Night and by Day — when you lye down, and when you rise up — when you go out, and when you come in : At Home and Abroad, learn and accustom yourselves to pray to him and praise him. In all your Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your Paths.*

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1 Chron.  
xxviii. 9.

I CONCLUDE this Address with the Words of *David*, to the Grandeur and Propriety of which, nothing can be added, but the Consideration of the Time and Manner of their Delivery. They are addressed to his own SON, in the Presence of all his Princes and People, assembled on Purpose to receive his last Benediction and Advice, under the Prospects of his approaching Death. In this august Assembly, the infirm old King stands up — and having first addressed to his People, he turns to his YOUNG SON, placed at his Right-Hand, and bespeaks him thus — *And thou Solomon, my Son, know thou the God of thy Father — and serve him with a perfect Heart and with a willing Mind. — For the Lord searcheth all Hearts — and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts — If thou seek him, he will be found of thee — But if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*





## S E R M O N VII.

The WORD of GOD the YOUNG  
MAN'S GUIDE.



PSALM CXIX. 9.

*Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his  
Way? By taking Heed thereto, according  
to thy Word.*

**N** O Inquiry can be of greater Im-  
portance than this before us,  
*Wherewith shall a Young Man  
cleanse his Way?* Nor can an

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Answer, or Direction be more proper than  
this, *By taking Heed thereto according to  
God's Word.* If he duly attend to this Rule  
and Guide, the Young Man may keep clear  
of all the Defilements, which there are in  
the World, through Lust and Sin, and ar-  
rive at Manhood pure and uncorrupt. This

short, but comprehensive Directory, contains in it two Parts.

- I. THE Young Man must cultivate and preserve in his Mind a constant Regard to God, and make this the governing Principle of his Heart and Life. This I considered in my last Discourse; and now proceed to shew,
- II. THAT he must set before himself the WORD OF GOD, as his Rule and Guide; and constantly endeavour to form his Temper, and regulate his whole Conduct, according to the Directions and Precepts therein contained.

UNDER the former Head, I endeavoured to shew, That no Authority but that of God, nor any Principle but sincere Piety, is sufficient to preserve the Innocence, and secure the Virtue of the *Youth*. This must be his quickening Motive to Duty, his Restraint from Sin, and Defence against the Power of every Temptation. But still the Youth wants a safe *Monitor* and *Guide*; a safe and plain Rule of Conduct, to be the Man of his

Counsel

Counsel, and Guide of his Youth, especially now he is leaving the Eye of his Parents and first Guardians, and entering upon the World Himself. Now, Where shall this safe and universal Guide be found? I profess I know of none, but the *Word of God*. All, that choose and make this their Guide and Rule, are sure to cleanse their Way; but not one besides.

THE *Way of Man is not in himself*—much less of the Young Man, or Youth. In most Cases Experience he has none, upon his first setting out in Life; and Knowledge, Prudence, and Penetration, whatever he may vainly imagine, he can have but little; for it is by *Use*, that we come to *have our Senses exercised, to discern both Good and Evil*. If therefore the Young Man cannot be prevailed with to take the *Word of God* for his Rule and Guide, he will be defiled, and involved before he is aware. His very Innocence, fearing and suspecting no Evil, will betray him. If thus left to himself without Rule or Guide, his Progress in Wisdom is sure to be slow: And whence must it arise, but from sad and dear-bought Experience? Wherewith then shall a Young Man cleanse

Heb. v.  
14.

his Way? — Wherewith indeed; but *by taking Heed thereto according to GOD'S WORD.*

BUT here a previous Question arises, What does the Psalmist mean by the WORD OF GOD? Some of you perhaps will be surpris'd, that I should make a Question of this; imagining, without Thought, that he means the *Written Word*, our *Bible*, and all that is contained in it, from the Beginning of the Book of *Genesis*, to the End of the *Revelations*. But it is easy to see, that this could not possibly be the Thing, the *Psalmist* intended. Think not, that I am intimating, as if the *Word of God* was not contained in these Writings. — Wait a little, and I will shew and prove the contrary. But at present, allow me to observe, that these Writings are not, nor could possibly be, what the Psalmist intended; for this plain and obvious Reason; because the greater Part of these Books were wrote by Persons, who were not born till long after. — Many of them were not born till many Ages after. For Instance, the Authors of the whole New Testament, and of all the Books of the Prophets, were not born till long after *David's Time*; not to mention the Authors of many other Books of the

the Old Testament, and particularly of this Book of Psalms. All this needs no Proof, but only the Consideration, When the several Authors lived.

You will perhaps think, Then the Psalmist must mean by the *Word of God*, the Books of *Moses*. I answer, nor can that be his *principal* Intention ; for many Reasons ready to be offered. But it is Time to mention, what the Psalmist did mean by the *Word of God*, to which the Young Man, and indeed every Man, must take Heed, if he would cleanse his Way. And doubtless he meant what *Moses* mentions, *Deut. xxx. 11—14*. And the Apostle *Paul* cites from him, *Rom. x. 6—8*. The Words of *Moses* are these, *For this Commandment which I command thee this Day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may bear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may bear it and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou mayest do it.* The Apostle *Paul* referring

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referring to this Passage of *Moses*, and shewing, that the Case was the same still, under the Christian Dispensation, says, *The Righteousness, which is of Faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine Heart, who shall ascend into Heaven, to bring Christ down from above? Or who shall descend into the Deep, to bring up Christ again from the Dead? For what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that is the Word of Faith, which we preach.* This doubtless is the *Word of God* principally intended through the whole of this long Psalm; and through the whole Book of Psalms, whenever the *Word of God* is mentioned; namely, The inward Manifestation of his Will, which God makes to every Rational Being, who attends to it. Thus in the Verses following my Text. *With my whole Heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy Commandments. Thy Word have I bid in my Heart, that I might not sin against thee. — I will meditate in thy Precepts, and have Respect unto thy Ways. I will delight myself in thy Statutes, I will not forget thy Word. — Thy Testimonies are my Delight and my Counsellors. — Thy Word is a Lamp to my Feet,*  
and



*and a Light to my Path. — Thy Testimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my Heart.* In short, the whole of this long Psalm, is chiefly intended to awaken the Attention of every one, and particularly of the Young Man, to this *Word of God*, as the Rule and Guide of Conduct; and so indeed is a great Part of this Collection of Psalms. Thus in the first Psalm, *Blessed is the Man, whose Delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night. He shall be like a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water, that bringeth forth his Fruit in his Season — His Leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

THIS my Friends, is the first and constant *Voice* and *Word of God* to Man, in all Ages and in all Nations. — Prior to any External Revelation or Teaching: Which no Messenger, no Law-giver, no Prophet, nor any written Word, has superseded or silenced. Thus God spake to Man, before he spake in Times past, by Prophets, or Preachers of Righteousness; and thus he speaks still, and ever will speak. This *Word* and *Law* of his, was wrote long before the two Tables of  
Stone

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Matt. v.  
18.

Stone were hewen ; and *written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God — not in Tables of Stone, but in fleshly Tables of the Heart.* These original Oracles of God, remain still ; though the two first of *Moses's* Tablets were broke, and the two second are long since perished and lost ; but the *Word of God*, of which we now speak, *liveth and abideth for ever.* Not one Jot or Tittle of this is passed, nor ever will pass away, whilst the Earth endures, and Man exists upon it. *Moses* is dead, and the Prophets are dead, and Christ is dead, and his Apostles are dead ; but though they are all dead, this *Word of God* still lives and speaks — *His Voice is gone out through all the Earth, and his Words to the End of the World ;* even that *Word of God*, of which we now speak. Call it by what Name you please, the Thing is the same, whether the Spirit, which God the Father of our Spirits, has breathed into Man, that Natural *Inspiration of the Almighty, which giveth him Understanding.* — Or Conscience, the Vicegerent of God — or God himself, in the Soul of Man — or the Spirit of God, witnessing with our Spirits — or the Natural Light within — or moral Sense

Sense — or the Law of God upon the Human Heart, whereby they who have no *written Law*, do by Nature the Things contained in the best written Laws, and hereby shew the Work of God's Law written in their Hearts, whilst their Consciences accuse or excuse them, according as they act, Right or Wrong. The Thing intended under all these Phrases, I say, is the same, it is the *Voice and Word of God* within us, and to us, to which we shall all do well to take Heed; and particularly, the *Young Man*, who would *cleanse his Way*. This is the Divinity that speaks within us. — It is God himself that points us forward, and with a secret Voice unheard by any, but the Man himself, says to all, *This is the Way, walk in it* — This is Right, that is Wrong — This leads to Life; that to Destruction and Death; — And this, whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear.

THIS *Word of God* is that *Divine Voice*, which *Socrates* declared when he came to die; had always attended him from his Childhood, and restrained him in lesser as well as greater Things, whenever he was  
going

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going to act Wrong \*. Nor was this peculiar to *Socrates* — he did not pretend it — but as he spent his Time chiefly in the Instruction of Youth, he supposed this same Divine Voice and Word of God, to be in every one of them, and adapted his Instructions to it, by asking his young Disciples familiar and important Questions: Hereby opening the Eyes of their Minds, and leading them to see and think for themselves, and hearken to the *Word of God* within them. If they were averse to this, and would not follow this *Word of God*, he gave them up as no Sheep or Disciples of his. Had any of his Disciples asked him as in my Text, *Wherewith shall a Young Men cleanse his Way?* His answer would have been, *By taking Heed thereto according to God's Word.* If we examine, I doubt not (judging of others

\* ὑμεῖς ἐμὲ πολλάκις ἀκηκόατε πολλαχῆ λέγοντος, ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται φωνή — ἐμοὶ δὲ τὸ ἐστὶν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον, φωνή τις γιγνομένη, ἢ ὅταν γένηται, αἰεί ἀποτρέπει με τέττο ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, — καὶ παγκάλως δέ μοι δοκεῖ ἐναντιῆσθαι. —

ἢ γὰρ εἰωθυῖά μοι ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόῳ χρόνῳ παντὶ πάνυ πυκνὴ αἰὲ ἦν, καὶ πανυ ἐπὶ σμικροῖς ἐναντιωμένη, ἔτι μεέλλοιμι μὴ ὀρθῶς πράττειν — καὶ τοι ἐν λόγοις πολλαχῆ δὴ με ἐπέχε λεγόντα μεταξύ. Plat. Apol. Soc. Cap. 13. et 21.

others from myself) we shall all find, that this Voice and Word of God, has attended us from our Youth up, whether we obeyed it or not. *Enoch* and *Noah* walked with God, by obeying this Divine Word, and so did *Abraham*, and others.

PERMIT me to subjoin here, a Remark of Mr. *Hales*, “ The Love and Favour, says  
“ he, which it pleased God to bear to the  
“ Fathers before the Law, so far prevailed,  
“ that without any Books and Writings, he  
“ communicated himself unto them by familiar and friendly conversing with them,  
“ and made them receive and understand  
“ his Laws. Their inward Conceptions and  
“ Intellectuals being, as St. *Basil* expresses it,  
“ as it were *figured* and *charactered* by his  
“ Spirit, so that they could not but see, confessed unto, and confess the Truth of them.  
“ This Way of God’s manifesting his Will,  
“ besides many other gracious Privileges above that which in After-Ages came in  
“ the Place of it, had this added, that it  
“ brought with it unto the Man, to whom  
“ it was made, a Preservation against all  
“ Doubt and Hesitation ; both a full Assurance who the Author was, and how far  
“ his

“ his Intent and Meaning reached. We  
 “ that are their Offspring, ought, as St. *Cbry-*  
 “ *ostome* says, so to have demeaned ourselves,  
 “ that it might have been with us, as it was  
 “ with them, that we might have had no  
 “ Need of Writing — no other Teacher but  
 “ the Spirit — no other Books but our Hearts  
 “ — no other Means to be taught the Things  
 “ of God, but the Internal and sweeter Doc-  
 “ trine of Divine Inspiration, whereby with-  
 “ out the Sounds of Words, and without  
 “ the Elements of Letters, Truth speaks  
 “ the more sweetly, as it speaks the more  
 “ secretly †. When the unhappy Posterity  
 “ were degenerated from the antient Purity  
 “ of their Fore-fathers; and when God him-  
 “ self refused to speak unto our Hearts,  
 “ he then began to put his Laws in Writ-  
 “ ing:” Or rather, when Men neglected to  
 look inward, and attend to this *Internal*  
*Voice and Word of God*: For God still speaks  
 to every Man, if Men would but hear and  
 attend. The Laws of all Nations suppose  
 this — the Justice of every Judicial Sentence  
 depends

† Nisi Inspirationis divinæ internam suavioremque Doc-  
 trinam ubi sine sonis Sermonum et sine Elementis Literarum  
 eò dulcius quò secretius Veritas loquitur. L. 3. Epist. 106.



depends upon it, and the Prophets of Old, our Saviour, and his Apostles all assert it — all agreeing in this, *God hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what the Lord thy God requireth of thee* — assuring us, that the Meek God will guide in Judgment, the Meek he will teach his Way — to the Pure he will shew himself pure — yea, blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God; and the Path of the Just is as the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.

I HAVE dwelt the longer upon this first and Original Sense of the *Word of God*, intended in my Text, in as much as since we have the *Word of God* committed to Writing, this former is too little thought on; and though God is continually speaking to us, yet this *Word of God* is scarce in all our Thoughts. *We hear the Sound thereof, but consider not whence it cometh*, or sure we durst not disobey its Voice.

I NOW proceed to consider, *the Word of God* that has been preached and published to the World; and is since written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the Ages are come. What I am now intending, is thus summed up in the Introduction of the Epi-

SERMON  
VII.John i. 14,  
16, 18.

He to the *Hebrews*, God, who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, spake in Time past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken unto us by his Son. And the next Chapter begins, *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest Heed to the Things, which we have heard, lest at any Time we should let them slip; for if the Word spoken by Angels, or Messengers, was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience, received a just Recompence of Reward, How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will?* St. John with a peculiar Emphasis expresses the same Thought thus, *And the WORD was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten, or of the best Beloved, of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. — And of his Fullness, have all we received, and Grace for Grace. No Man hath seen God at any Time; the Only Begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. The Word*  
of

*of God was made Flesh, and God spake to Men, by his Beloved Son, who taught the Way of God fully and perfectly ; so that now we are complete in him, having a perfect Rule and Directory respecting the whole Will of God. This Word of God is now written by the Disciples of Jesus, that we may believe that Jesus is the anointed Son of God, and that believing we may have Life through his Name.*

John xx;  
31.

Do you ask, How we may know this, That the Doctrine of Jesus and his Apostles, or of the Prophets of Old, is the *Word of God*, as it now stands written in our Bible ? I answer, that though I have not Time to enter upon other Arguments, and particularly those which attest the special Mission of Christ, we have One now before us abundantly sufficient to give full Satisfaction. A Proof, that lies open to ALL, and which Young Minds may see and comprehend. If the Defenders of our Holy Religion would fix their Foot, and stand here ; and lay out their Time and Thoughts in searching the Scriptures, and illustrating them to this useful Purpose, they would not only promote the best Interest of well-disposed Believers ;

but they would *put to Silence the Ignorance of Foolish Men.* It is the Defenders of the *written Word of God*, not knowing, or not considering its Nature and Design, that have raised up and multiplied the Number of its Opponents, and furnished them with their Objections ; but what God and Christ have joined together, let no Man put asunder. The WORD OF GOD, whether *Written or Preached*, as a Rule of Life and Conduct, intended to teach us to *cleanse our Way*, and *make us Wise to Salvation*, is *Self-evident.* — It shines with its own Native Light, and is, or may be known by every Man, who will compare it with the *Law of God* in his own Mind, and the *Word of God within him.* If any Man speak, let him speak, as this Internal Oracle of God ; if he speak not according to this, he *has no Light in him.* Think not that I am here setting up *Human Reason* above *Revelation*, or as the *Test* of it. No. I know the Ignorance and Vanity of Human *Wrangling*, which generally passes for *Reasoning.* But what I propose is the *Word and Secret Voice of God within us.* — Not Enthusiastick Fancy, nor any private Imagination ; but that *Word of God*,  
which

which is common to Man — common to *All*, as before described. We Christians, are bid to *try or prove All Things, and hold to that which is Good* — We are bid to *try the Spirits, whether they be of God*. Now if we bring them to the Test of *Conscience*, of *Moral Sense*, and of the *Word of God within us*, telling us uniformly and constantly, this is *Right*, and that *Wrong*; by this Means we may assuredly know, whether the Rules of Conduct laid down in any *Writing*, are agreeable to, and how far they are agreeable to the *Will of God*, concerning us, or not.

No Imposture can stand this Test: But it is the Glory of our Holy Religion, and of the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, that he submitted his Doctrine to this Test; and as he did it, let us do so still — it will stand this Test, and establish itself on this Bottom, commending itself to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God; but we weaken its Credit, if we decline this Trial.

It is observable, that a great Part of our Saviour's Instructions was delivered in Parables, and in Proverbial Allusive and Figurative Phrases and Comparisons. Now what can interpret and perceive the Meaning and Intent of these, but the *Light and Word of*



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Matt. xiii.  
13—16.

Luke xii.  
57.

John v.  
31—39.

*God within us?* If we attend to this, his Instructions will appear plain and familiar; but without it, *How can we understand All Parables*, or even any One of them. Without this, *by Hearing we shall hear, but not understand; and seeing we shall see, but not perceive* — But blessed are your Eyes when they see, and your Ears when they hear. Yea, and *why even of yourselves judge ye not, what is right?* To omit a thousand other Illustrations and Proofs, allow me to set before you two or three Passages of our Divine Teacher, wherein he appeals to the same Evidence as Proof, that what he taught in Person, was the *Word of God*, that I am now appealing to as Proof, that the *Written Account* we now have of his Doctrine, is the *Word of God*. He says, *If I bear Witness of myself, my Witness is not true* — (were this all, I should deserve no Credit or Regard) *Nor do I receive Testimony from Man*, (and rest my Credentials here) *But I have a greater Witness, than that of John, or of any Man, For the Works which the Father hath given me to perfect, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath*



hath born Witness of me. But ye have neither heard his Voice at any Time, nor seen his Shape; and ye have not his WORD abiding in you, for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. He adds, Search the Scriptures, those Writings of your Law-giver and Prophets, in them you think, that you have the Way to Eternal Life; now search them, and you will find them likewise to be my Witnesses; as I preach the same Doctrine therein contained, and that in the greatest Purity and Perfection. From this Argument, any pure, pious, and well-disposed Mind, upon reading the Written Doctrine of Christ, may know it to be the Word of God, by comparing it with the Word and Law of God in his own Heart and Mind. Here is the Force of that Expression, *I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep, and am known of mine. — My Sheep bear my Voice, and I know them; and they follow me — But others believe not because they are not of my Sheep, not having the Word of God the Father abiding in them.* This explains John vi. 37—45. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me, and he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. — Murmur not among yourselves; no Man can*

John xiv.  
28.

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*come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. — As if he had said, “ There “ is Nothing in me, nor in my Doctrine, “ to induce any Man to follow me, unless “ his own well-disposed Mind, and the Word “ of God within him, tell him that my “ Words are the Word of God.” Accordingly he adds Ver. 45. It is written in the Prophets, and they shall be all taught of God: Every Man therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto Me, Read and compare Heb. viii. 8—11.*

My Mind is full of the Argument and Illustration before us, shewing, that we carry in our Breasts the fullest Witness, even the Word and Testimony of the God and Father of All, that the Religion of Jesus is the *Word of God*, to which we shall do well to take Heed, as to the most sure Word of Prophecy, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in our Hearts. God never left himself without Witness — He is the Father of Lights, without Variableness, or Shadow of turning — The true Light which lighteth every Man, that cometh into the World. But here was the Sin and Wretchedness

edness of most Men, and is so still, *They loved Darkneſs rather than Light — their Eyes they had cloſed*; and when this is the Caſe, *the Light ſhineth in Darkneſs, and the Darkneſs comprehendeth it not.* The Son of God came to *open Mens Eyes, to turn them from Darkneſs to Light*, to awake them to attend to the Word of God, and the Religion of Man. Open your Eyes and behold the Way taught by Jeſus, is the good old Way: *Abraham ſaw it, yea, it was before Abraham's Time, It is an Highway, the Way of Holineſs, the Unclean cannot paſs over it, but way-faring Men, though Fools, ſhall not err therein.*

Isaiah  
XXXV. 8.

THE Sum of my Argument is this ; ſearch the Scriptures, compare the *Written Word* with the *Word of God* within, and if they appear to be One and the Same, then *receive it, not as the Word of Man, but as it is indeed the Word of God, which is able to ſave your Souls.* How is our Apoſtle charmed with this Thought, when obſerving how the Jews in reading the Ritual Law, unable to find any *Word of God*, any Counter-part or Original, within themſelves, anſwering to theſe *beggarly Elements*, or to the *Traditions*  
of

SERMON  
VII.2 Cor. iii.  
15, &c.

of their Elders, he says, *Even unto this Day when Moses is read, a Vail is upon their Heart. But when they turn to the Lord, and attend to the true Word of God, the Vail will be taken away. Then we all with open Face, beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory by the Spirit of the Lord. He goes on, Therefore seeing we have this Ministry, as we have received so merciful a Dispensation, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling the WORD OF GOD deceitfully, but by Manifestation of the Truth, commending ourselves to every Man's Conscience, in the Sight of God. — But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom, some God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and Ourselves your Servants, for Jesus Sake. For God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into our Hearts, to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. But we have*  
*this*

*this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of Us.* We may see upon the whole, Why the common People could understand and feel our Saviour's Preaching, and whence its Authority upon their Minds arose.

I SHALL now conclude with a particular Address to Young Persons. I have, my Young Friends, been setting before you a Rule of Conduct, how to escape the Pollutions of the World, and cleanse your Way — and how to lay a Foundation for passing through the whole of this Life and World, with a Pure Heart, an undefiled Conscience, an unblemished Character; and for being at last presented faultless before the Presence of God's Glory, with exceeding Joy. If you would *cleanse your Way*, you must *take Heed thereto according to God's Word*. This the *Word of God* in your Hearts, and this the *Written Word of God*, which is set before your Eyes, jointly teach. I have no Doubt, and I imagine you have none, of the Rectitude and Sufficiency of these Means, and of this Method, to secure the desired End. My only Fear is, lest any of you should go away, and count yourselves unconcerned about



bout so great and so desirable an Happiness; and put from you the *Word of God*. Let not this be done through a mistaken Apprehension, as if the Choice and Course of Life now prescribed, would deprive you of the true Pleasures of Youth. No — my Young Friends, this will deliver you from those youthful Lusts and Follies, which drown so many in Ruin and Perdition; but not deprive you of ONE sincere and true Pleasure. All these may be enjoyed in Conjunction with Virtue and Piety, pure and unmixed. *Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Paths of Peace. There is no Peace, saith my God, nor any true Pleasure to the Wicked: But great Peace, and Manly Pleasure, have all they that love God's Law, and nothing can offend them.* Forbidden Pleasures are no Pleasures; they are mixed with Gall and Wormwood. There is no Pleasure in Nature *peculiar* to Sin; none, but what may be enjoyed, and that in the highest Perfection, with Innocence and Virtue. A virtuous and pious Youth will yield the most sincere Pleasure and Satisfaction upon Review, through the whole Remainder of Life; yea, as long as the Soul  
is



is capable of looking back to its Original, through the distant Ages of Eternity. And think, what pleasing Satisfaction at present to feel and know, that your Hearts and Ways are right with God — that your Innocence is still safe — that every Month and every Year strengthens your Virtue, confirms your Resolutions, and encreases your Joy. — To think, that like your Young Saviour, you *grow in Wisdom as in Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.* When you feel the early Workings of Faith, Hope, and Joy in God, O with what unutterable Extasy must your Hearts lift up themselves to him, and say, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.* — And knowing at the same Time, that you are the Joy of your Parents, the Delight of your Friends, and the Admiration and Hope of the Rising Age — What Pleasure! What Satisfaction is this?

Look forward and behold; A few, a very few Years will advance you to *Manhood*, and settle you out of the Reach of those Struggles and Temptations, which attend the Voyage of *Youth*. And what, cannot you watch one Hour? O, *watch and pray, that you enter not into Temptation.* Do this, and you will  
soon

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soon reach the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. Do this, and you will escape the Worst of all Evils, and be incapable of ever feeling the bitter Anguish, and confounding Shame of a guilty Conscience—Jesus will look down upon you, and love you. You will hear your Heavenly Father say to you, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

To this End, *take Heed to your Ways according to God's Word.* Be Heedful, be Prudent, be Circumspect; and take your Measures and Directions from the *Word of God.* Attend to the *Voice and Word of God within you.* *Quench not his Holy Spirit.* Dread the Thought of *resisting God.* Harken constantly to that friendly and secret Voice of his, which follows you, and says, *This is the Way, walk in it.* *Trust in the Lord with all thy Heart, and lean not to thine own Understanding: In all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths.* *Be not wise in thine own Eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from Evil.*

AGAIN, attend seriously to the Reading and Preaching of the *Word of God.* Read and study the *Bible*, not as trifling Criticks,  
but

but as serious Christians. Select and treasure up the Rules and Principles of Prudence, Virtue, and Piety, therein contained. The *Word of God* abounds with them. You will find it a Fund of Divine Knowledge. Our Bible, and particularly, our *Christian New Testament*, is the best Edition of that *Word of God*, which is written in our Hearts. I speak the Sentiments of my Soul, after reading it so often, and after reading so many other Books. If I knew of a better Book, or of any to be compared with it, I would recommend it; but in Truth I do not. Besides, it abounds with peculiar *exceeding great and precious Promises*; and justly comes upon the Mind with a Divine Authority and Power, not as the *Word of Man*, but as the *Word of God*. Read it frequently — meditate upon it — it will awaken prudent and wise Thoughts, which otherwise had never arisen in the Mind; but when awakened, will be confirmed by the *Word of God within you*.

FINALLY, my Young Brethren, *Be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand — and having done all to stand; Stand therefore, having your Loyns girt about with*

Eph. vi.  
10—13.

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*with Truth, and having on the Breast-Plate of Righteousness, and your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace — over all, taking the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD OF GOD. — Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance.*

1 Thess. v.  
23, 24.

AND now may the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, that your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do your Part, and then know assuredly, faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

AND now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

HOW

**H**OW shall the Young secure their  
Hearts,

And guard their Lives from Sin ?  
Thy Word the choicest Rules imparts,  
To keep the Conscience clean.

When once it enters to the Mind,  
It spreads such Light abroad,  
The meanest Souls Instructions find,  
And raise their Thoughts to God.

'Tis like the Sun, an heav'nly Light,  
That guides us all the Day ;  
And through the Dangers of the Night,  
A Lamp to lead our Way.

Thy Word is everlasting Truth ;  
How pure is ev'ry Page !  
That holy Book shall guide our Youth,  
And well support our Age.



# S E R M O N VIII.



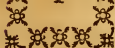

CREATION, OF OUR OBLIGATIONS  
to GOD our MAKER.



PSALM lxxi. 5, 6.

*For thou art my Hope, O Lord God. — Thou  
art my Trust from my Youth — By thee  
have I been holden up from the Womb —  
Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's  
Bowels — My Praise shall be continually of  
thee.*

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 H A T Hymn of Divine Praise,  
 T which does the greatest Honour  
 to our English Language, is a  
 Version of this *Psaln*. Our Poet

appears to have been struck with the Sentiments contained in it, and to have indulged to Meditation, 'till he caught the Fire, and then wrote under the Influence of the same Spirit,



Spirit, that first inspired the Hebrew Author. As I intend to conclude my two Discourses on this Subject, with the Hymn itself, so I shall introduce this with Part of the Author's own Preface. " There is not, " as he observes, a more pleasing Exercise " of the Mind, than *Gratitude*. It is accompanied with such an inward Satisfaction, that the Duty is sufficiently rewarded by the Performance. It is not like the Practice of many other Virtues, difficult and painful, but attended with so much Pleasure, that were there no positive Command, that enjoined it, nor any Recompence laid up for it hereafter, a generous Mind would indulge to it, for the natural Gratification that accompanies it.

" If *Gratitude* is due from Man to Man, " How much more from Man to his Maker? The *Supreme Being* does not only confer upon us those Bounties which proceed more immediately from his Hand, but even those Benefits which are conveyed to us by others. Every Blessing we enjoy, by what Means soever it may be derived upon us, is the Gift of him who is

“ the great Author of Good, and Father of  
“ Mercies.

“ IF Gratitude, when exerted towards  
“ one another, naturally produces a very  
“ pleasing Sensation in the Mind of a grate-  
“ ful Man; it exalts the Soul into Rapture,  
“ when it is employed on this great Object  
“ of Gratitude — on this Beneficent Being,  
“ who has given us every Thing we already  
“ possess, and from whom we expect every  
“ Thing we yet hope for.

“ THE Jews, who before the Times of  
“ Christianity had the Knowledge of the  
“ True God, have set the Christian World  
“ an Example, how they ought to employ  
“ the Divine Talent of Poetry. As that Na-  
“ tion produced Men of great Genius, with-  
“ out considering them as inspired Writers,  
“ they have transmitted to us many Hymns  
“ and Divine Odes, which excel those that  
“ are delivered down to us, by the Ancient  
“ *Greeks* and *Romans*, in the Poetry, as  
“ much as in the Subject to which it was  
“ consecrated. This I think might easily be  
“ shewn, if there were Occasion for it.”

WE have many and various Instances in  
this Book, or Collection of Psalms, but none  
that

that exceeds it, or affords better Assistance and greater Pleasure to a devout Mind, than the *Psalms* before us. Antiquity informs us, that either it was composed in *Babylon*, as a Comfort to the Jews in their Captivity, or rather singled out for their Use in that disconsolate State. It now stands in our Version without a Title; but the Contents make it highly probable, and the Commentators seem to confirm it, that as *Grotius* expresses it, the preceding Psalm *has usurped its Title, A Psalm of David to bring to Remembrance*. Read it through, and you will find, it is one of the noblest Compositions of this Kind. It discovers itself to be the Product of a calm, serious, and pious Mind, retired into itself — big with Thoughts and Meditations upon God — and inspired with pious Gratitude, resulting from a View of the whole Series of Divine Goodness, which had attended the Author, from the first Moment of his coming into Life, to that Day.

THE Psalmist was now *old and gray-headed; his Strength failed him*; he was surrounded with Enemies, who *spoke against him, took Counsel together, and lay in wait for his Life*. At this advanced Age, and under these Cir-

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VIII.

cumstances, he renews his Strength, and takes fresh Encouragement, from this Review of God's former Mercies. — *In thee, O Lord, do I put my Trust, for thou art, or rather, thou hast been, my Hope, O Lord God, thou hast been my Trust from my Youth. By thee have I been holden up from the Womb; thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels—my Praise shall be continually of thee.* It follows, *I am as a Wonder unto many; but thou art my strong Refuge. Let my Mouth be filled with thy Praise, and with thy Honour all the Day. Cast me not off in the time of Old-Age; forsake me not, when my Strength faileth. I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My Mouth shall shew forth thy Righteousness and thy Salvation all the Day; for I know not the Numbers thereof.* — *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works: Now also, when I am Old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy Strength to this Generation, and thy Power to every one, that is to come.*

You will here observe the Workings of a pious and devout Mind; one while looking  
back,

*back*, and tracing the whole Series of former Mercies up to their first Original, and to their Author, God. — Then *looking around* upon its present Situation, and surrounding Circumstances — and from thence *looking forward* into Futurity ; and in the lively Exercise of Faith, Hope, and Confidence in God, breaking forth into Adoration, Prayer, and Praise.

THE two Verses which I have chose for my present Subject, confine our Thoughts to the FIRST of these Views ; where the Psalmist is looking back to the Time of his Birth, calling to Remembrance, and gratefully acknowledging the Care which God had took of him, from the Moment, when he first entered into Being, to the Time when he composed this Psalm ; *Thou hast been my Hope; O Lord God — Thou hast been my Trust from my Youth — by thee have I been holden up from the Womb, thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels.*

SOME perhaps can see little in this Subject, or in the Works of Creation, and Common Providence, that deserves such Notice, or that has a Tendency to awaken such pious

Gratitude and Devotion, or to lay a Foundation for such Hope and Trust in God.

IN my farther Discourse therefore from this Passage,

- I. I SHALL endeavour to remove such unworthy Sentiments of God, and his Providence ; and then proceed,
- II. To a more particular Consideration of our Obligations to God, for the *Original* Gift of Being, and for the subsequent Care he has took of us, from the Beginning of our Natural Lives to this Day.

SOME may be ready to ask, “What was “there in my Conception and Birth ; or what “in the Time of helpless Infancy, worth calling to Remembrance in this pious and devout Manner ?” I answer, If any of you have never considered this, it is high Time you should. The Preacher directs, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth* : And certainly, we should not forget him, when we are old ; nor indeed, in any Part of Life. This is not less, but more the Duty of the *Man*, than of the *Youth*, or *Child*.

This



This will fully appear afterwards ; at present I only remark, that the Psalmist appears to have made this the Subject of his frequent Thoughts, and pious Meditations. My Text is not the only Passage to this Purpose. You have the same Thought in *Psalm xxii. 9, 10.* *Thou art he, that took me out of the Womb ; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my Mother's Breasts. I was cast upon thee from the Womb, thou art my God, from my Mother's Belly.* Thus again, *Psalm cxxxix. 13—18.* *Thou hast possessed my Reins ; thou hast covered me in my Mother's Womb. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ; marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. My Substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest Parts of the Earth. (As much in secret, and out of the Reach of all-created Sight and Aid, as if I had been formed in the Center of the Earth) Thine Eyes did see my Substance, and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in Continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy Thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the Sum of them ? If I should*

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Pfal. c. 3.

*should count them, they are more in Number than the Sand: When I awake, I am still with thee.* And to stir up others to the like Meditations, he says, *Know ye, that the Lord he is God, it is he that made us, and not we ourselves, we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* Let us learn then to make a continued Practice of calling to Remembrance the Original Grant of Being, together with the early and constant Care, which our Creator has took of us from the very Beginning, and through the whole of Life.

AND here let it not be said or thought, that these Things are *old* and *past*; and therefore unworthy of our present Notice. This my Friends, would be cancelling all the Obligations of Friendship, and Gratitude. To prevent this, the Psalm before us was composed, *A Psalm to call to Remembrance*; and to direct and assist us in this Duty. Mercies do not cease to be Mercies; nor do Acts of Kindness and Friendship lose their Nature or Obligation with *Age*. Yea, it is the chief Part of Gratitude, to commemorate *past* Gifts and Benefits; especially, if we have not been able to make an adequate Return since; this we never did, nor ever can make to God  
for

for the Blessings of Creation and Providence. We must therefore for ever remain bound to remember, and renew our Acknowledgments for all his *former* Mercies — This is both our Duty and our Happiness. And, as we were insensible of God's Goodness, when he *first* brought us into Being, and incapable of returning to him so much as *one* grateful Thought or Affection, it remains for us to do it, now we are capable.

BESIDES, it is the Property of a little, a narrow, and thoughtless Mind, to be affected with nothing, but *present* Benefits. Had we none but *these* to feast upon, we should be fed like the poorest and most indigent of our Fellow-Creatures, from *Hand to Mouth* — or rather, like irrational Brutes, which have no Sense of any Thing, but *present* Enjoyments; being insensible both of *past* and *future* Happiness: Though indeed some of them seem to have more Gratitude, and Sense of Obligation, to the Hand that feeds and provides for them, than ungrateful Men have to their earthly Friends, or to their God. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled* Isai. i. 2, 3.

*rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib: But Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* This stupid Ingratitude, is both the Sin and Misery of Man. To live unmindful of God's *Former Mercies*, and forget all his Benefits, is to rob ourselves of our chief Treasure; or rather to squander away all our Income, as fast as we receive it.

ON the other Hand, to take due Notice of God's Mercies, to treasure them up in our Minds, and make a Practice of *calling to Remembrance his Loving Kindness of Old*, and stirring up all that is within us to bless his Name;—This — This, my Friends, is the Way, the only Way, to grow rich towards God; rich in true, spiritual, Divine Happiness. *Past Mercies*, yield a *present*, a fresh, and most grateful Sensation, when thus recollected by a grateful Mind; and the Happiness arising upon this Review, far exceeds what attended the *first* Enjoyment. The *Former* was pleasing to the *bodily Senses*; the *Second* is pleasing to the *Mind*; and whilst the Heart glows with pious Gratitude, it conceives the most lively Hope and Joy in God.

BESIDES,

BESIDES, the Remembrance of *past* Mercies, sweetens the Relish of our *present* Enjoyments. And, when Sorrows and Afflictions come upon us — when the evil Days come, and the Years draw nigh, that have no Pleasure in them — when Old-Age is come, and the Outward Man decays, Day by Day; if we have not taught and inured ourselves to feast upon former Mercies, what is to be done for us? How shall we be left destitute of all Support, and of all Comfort! Not so, the pious and grateful Mind, that has learned to *look back*, and has treasured up in itself a due Sense and Remembrance of *Former* Mercies. Such a Soul can look *forward* with Hope and Confidence in the same God, his old and best Friend, and Heavenly Father. We have an Instance of this in the Psalmist; and Evidence of it in the Composure before us.

AGAIN, let us not think diminutively of the Blessings of Creation and Providence, because these are *COMMON Blessings*; bestowed upon *Others*, as well as *Ourselves*; and granted to *them*, and *us*, in a constant, Uniform, and regular Manner; as our Natures require, and our Wants call for them. It is not any peculiar

peculiar, special, or extraordinary Mercies of his *own*, that the Psalmist is here calling to Remembrance; but such as God kindly and graciously affords to *every* Man. — *By thee have I been holden up from the Womb; thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels.* Now, this is nothing but what is *common* to Man. God has done the same for you, and me, and every one of us. “O my Soul, thou art bound to acknowledge this with the same Spirit of pious Gratitude and Devotion!”

BUT sure neither *These*, nor any of God's Gifts and Mercies are the less valuable, because they are *common* and *constant*: — Certainly the contrary. None, but the meanest, the most contracted, or the most envious, and selfish Soul, can think otherwise. *Is it not lawful for God to do what he will with his own? Or is thine Eye evil, because his is good?* If so, thou art a most unworthy Member of Human Society, and unworthy of a Being in God's Creation.

THE real and intrinsic Worth of every Gift and Benefit arises, not from its *Rarity*, but its *Use* and *Necessity*. The Value of Food and Raiment depends, not upon its  
*Scarcity*



*Scarcity and High-Price*, but upon its Adaptedness to the Health and Welfare of the Body. None but a Fop, or a Fool can think otherwise. The Sun is not a *less*, but a far *greater* Blessing, because it rises regularly every Morning, and is made to know the Time of its Return; nor, because it rises upon the Evil and upon the Good, and all in common enjoy the Benefit of its Light and Heat. Nor is the Air less pure, because others breath in it. Accordingly, Life, and Being, and the common Care and Protection of Divine Providence, are not *less*, but far *greater* and more adorable Blessings, because so many others enjoy them in common with ourselves. *God is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works. He giveth to all, Life, and Breath, and all Things.* Look around, and behold, *His Hand has made all these Things. He holds every Soul in Life, and his Visitation preserves every Spirit. All Creatures wait upon him, and he giveth them their Food in due Season; he openeth his Hand, and they are satisfied with Good.* Yea, such is his disinterested Goodness, and diffusive Benevolence, that those Gifts and Blessings, that are the most *necessary*, are granted in  
common

common to ALL ; and that in such rich Abundance, that they cannot be engrossed, monopolized, or exhausted.

FARTHER, The Gifts and Blessings referred to in my Text, are what the World calls *Natural*; but let us not overlook, or undervalue them on that Account. I mean they are such Gifts as constitute our *Nature and Essence*, and are absolutely necessary to our Preservation and Support : Such as the *Original Grant of Life and Being* ; together with all our personal Powers and Capacities, both of Mind and Body, and all the necessary Supports of Life. Our *Natural Powers* are the *first* Gifts of God to Man, and fundamental to all the rest. Whatever in us is *natural*, is the Gift and Work of God — the God of Nature ; for what have we that we have not received ? *He made us, and not we ourselves* ; his *Hand formed and fashioned us altogether*. Our *Nature*, and the *Grace* of God towards us, commenced together ; and have been uniformly continued from the first Moment of our Existence, to this Day ; and therefore it is, that we are now the *living, the living to praise him*. To think or speak diminutively of our *Nature*, or of the

*common*

*common* Gifts and Care of his Providence, is to think and speak diminutively of the *Grace* of God, and of God himself. If there is any Thing *unnatural* in us, this is not from God, but superinduced, or acquired since — But whatever is *natural*, is from God, and demands our Gratitude and Praise. So thought the Psalmist, when adoring his Maker, he says, *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. Thou hast been my Hope, O Lord God; thou hast been my Trust from my Youth. By thee have I been holden up from the Womb; thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels, my Praise shall be continually of thee.*

Psalm  
CXXXIX.  
14.

I HAVE now gone through what I first proposed, endeavouring to remove unworthy Sentiments from such Minds, as can see little or nothing in the Works of *Creation*, and *Common Providence*, deserving such Notice, or exciting to such Devotion, as the Psalmist discovers in my Text. I now proceed,

- II. To a more particular Consideration of our Obligations to God for the *Original* Gift of Being — And for the *subsequent*
- N

*Creation, or our Obligations*

*sequent* Care he has took of us, from the Beginning of our natural Lives to this Day. And here,

FIRST, Let our Thoughts go back to the *Original of our Being*, that *first* and *great* Act of God, in bringing us into Existence, and giving us a Being amongst his Creatures. This is a Blessing that we have all received; the *first* and Foundation of *all* our Blessings. Out of absolute *Non-entity*, to be brought into *Existence* — out of *Nothing*, to be made *Something* — What can we say to this, but admire and adore! *It is the Lord's Doing, and it is marvellous in our Sight.* To raise the Dead to Life again, is astonishing; but not equal to the *first* Gift of Life and Being. This discovers the most absolute Power and Perfection of God. Now this is what we have all experienced, the Benefit of it we all enjoy, and the Evidence of it we carry along with us every Moment. There is no Difference here betwixt Man and Man — High and Low — Rich and Poor — Master and Servant. Speaking of his Servant, says *Job*, *Did not he that made me in the Womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the Womb?*

To

To this *Original* Gift, our Thoughts should often be going back ; and as often as they do so, they lead us to God.

THIS Original Grant should never be forgotten, nor one Day suffered to pass without a devout Remembrance. To forget this, is to forget both Ourselves, and our God — to forget that we are Creatures — dependent Creatures, whose Original sprang from Nothing, but the Creating Hand, which constantly *holds our Souls in Life, and from that God, whose Visitation preserves our Spirits,* Sure in the most distant Ages of Eternity, it will become every happy and celestial Spirit, frequently to look back to the Original of its Being, and adore its Author. This will farther appear to be the first and great Duty of Man, as we go on.

SECONDLY, To consider the Rank we hold in the Scale and Order of Beings ; and the Powers and Capacities of Mind and Body, which our Creator has given us. We are each of us living, rational Spirits ; made in the Likeness of God — capable of knowing, imitating, enjoying, and holding Communion with him. — To this End we are endowed with Reason, Understanding, Judg-

SERMON  
VIII.

Job xxxii.  
8.

Ch. xxxv.  
11.

ment, Memory, Moral Sense, and Freedom of Agency. At present; we are clothed upon with earthly Bodies, of an erect Form, with Parts, Limbs, and Senses, all fearfully and wonderfully made; adapted to this Part of God's Creation, where we are placed. All this is our *Birth-Right* — *There is a Spirit in Man, and the natural Inspiration of the Almighty, giveth him Understanding* — *God has taught us more than the Beasts of the Field; and made us wiser than the Fowls of Heaven.* — And what infinitely enhances the Value of our Being, above that of Brutes that perish, is this; our Souls are an *immortal Seed*; the Principle and Root of an *eternal Existence*, growing up under the Divine Culture, to unlimited Perfection in Wisdom, Holiness, and Happiness. Such a Prize is put into our Possession, if we have but Hearts to use and improve it.

INDEED, if we *neglect to retain God in our Knowledge* — if we neglect the Gifts that are in us — if we debase our Natures, and prostitute our Powers to Impiety and Wickedness, we *lose our Souls*, and it *had been better for us that we had not been born* — or that we *had been carried from the Womb to the*



*the Grave, before the Knees prevented us, and the Breasts that we should suck. Better to have been any Thing in this World, than Men, unless we be Good Men. But this does not diminish the Worth of our Natural Being, which is capable of it, and intended for growing up to unlimited, and never-ending Felicity.*

IT is true, these earthly Bodies will corrupt, decay, and die; the *Dust will return to Dust again, but the Spirit will return to God who gave it — and this we know, that if this earthly House of our Tabernacle be dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.*

Eccles. xii.  
7.  
2 Cor. v.  
1.

THIRDLY, Let us consider the *Nature and Form of the present World into which we are born, and our Situation in it.* This the Psalmist frequently makes the Subject of his Meditations. It would be endless to cite the several Passages. I only mention the viiiith Psalm: Where looking around him, he breaks out, *O Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens — When I consider the Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers; the Moon, and Stars, which thou hast ordained; What is Man that*

*thou art mindful of him ; and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him ! For thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with Glory and Honour. Thou madest him to have Dominion over the Works of thy Hands — Thou hast put all Things under his Feet — All Sheep and Oxen — yea, and the Beasts of the Field — The Fowl of the Air, and the Fish of the Sea, and the Ships that pass through the Paths of the Seas. — O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is thy Name in all the Earth !*

WERE a Being from some distant Part of God's immense Creation, to make a Visit to this Earth, which God has given to Children of Men : Or were some Man like the first Parent of our Race, to be brought into Being, not in a State of Infancy, but with bodily Senses, and mental Faculties in the Perfection of Manhood. — Think, with what Amazement, this Globe with all its Inhabitants, all its Apparatus, and all its surrounding Glories must strike him, upon the first View. — And when he discovered the Subserviency of each Part, to the good of the Whole—and attended to the Provision made for ALL, and especially for Man, how would he

he break forth with Adoration and Praise: And would not he say concerning Man, *Truly the Lines are fallen to him in pleasant Places, he has a goodly Heritage?* Yea, when this supposed Being was to depart, is it unnatural to imagine, that he would take his Leave, with a Spirit expressed in the Language of *Epictetus*, which is the true Spirit and Language of every departing Soul, that has gained a proper Disposition towards God. “Is  
“it thy Pleasure, that I should depart out of  
“this great Theatre, I am ready to depart  
“at thy Command — and I do it, returning  
“thee all possible Thanks, that thou hast  
“admitted me to behold this amazing Spec-  
“tacle — to behold thy Works, and the Ad-  
“ministration of thy Providence, in this Part  
“of thy Creation.”

THE Reason why we are not all thus affected and thus pleased, is this, We came into this World in the State of Infancy; grew up gradually, and in a Sort insensibly; and have now been so long Spectators, and seeing nothing *NEW under the Sun*, we are become unattentive to the Glory of God's Works, and despise our Birth-Right. Yea, too many speak diminutively, and blaspheme the

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VIII.

Job ii. 4.

*Works of God, which Men behold.* And yet They cannot avoid discovering the secret Fondness they have conceived for this Life and World. *Skin for Skin; yea, all that a Man has, will he give for his Life.* They are loath to depart, when the Time comes. Such are the Blessings and Endearments of the present State, that with all its Pains, Sorrows, and Imperfections, we can scarce thoroughly prevail with ourselves to exchange it, for any other State in God's Creation; though a far better is set before us, prepared from the Foundation of the World, for such as shall be found meet for spiritual and eternal Happiness.

I HAVE not Time to proceed to the other Particulars, which my Text leads us *to call to Remembrance*, I shall therefore conclude at present with this general Remark; that all these THREE, which I have mentioned, are included in this one Thought and result from it, *Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels* — And all THREE belong to each one of us, and to every Man upon the Face of the Earth. — We are all *brought into Life and Being*, by one and the same Hand — We are all Partakers of the *same common Nature*

ture — We are all of the same Species — the same Rank and Order of Beings — And we are all brought into the same World. — All these are the Effects of God's *special Grace and Favour* ; I call them by the Title of *special Grace*, because they are granted to the *HUMAN SPECIES*, as our peculiar and distinguishing Prerogative above the Brutes. We have all Bodies cast in the same Mould, and formed by the same Hand — We have all Souls endowed with the same Sort of Faculties ; and principled with the same Desires and Affections — We are all Partakers of Life ; and our Lives are equally desirable, and our Souls equally precious to us ALL. All these were enwrapped in our Infant-Nature, when God *took us out of our Mother's Bowels*, and have unfolded and discovered themselves since. We all enjoy, and are entitled to the Benefit of the same Light — We breath in the same Air—are supported by the same Earth — behold the Glory of the same World — are preserved in Life by the same Hand — and are maintained by the Care and Providence of the same God, who *has made of one Blood, all Nations of Men upon the Face of the Earth.* We are all his Offspring ; be-  
ing

SERMON  
VIII.

Prov. xxii.  
2.

1 Tim. ii.  
4.

Acts x.  
34.

ing the Children of the *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* It follows upon this, that as *God has a Respect to all the Works of his Hands,* and we have the Honour and Happiness to be of the Number of his Rational Creatures ; so we may assure ourselves of his equal Regards, if we do nothing to forfeit them. In all these Respects, there is no Difference betwixt Man and Man — Rich or Poor — High or Low — Bond or Free. *The Poor and the Rich meet together, and God is the Maker of them ALL.* They all meet together in the same World — live under the Care and Conduct of the same God — and are capable of rising to a Fitness for meeting together again in the same World ; for *God would have all Men to be saved ; and in every Nation, they that fear him and work Righteousness shall all be accepted.* If our Hearts are right with God, we may, any, or all of us, adopt my Text, and say with the Palmist, *Thou art my Hope, O Lord God, Thou art my Trust from my Youth. By thee have I been holden up from the Womb ; Thou art he, that took me out of my Mother's Bowels, my Praise shall be continually of thee.*

S E R-





## S E R M O N IX.

PROVIDENCE, OR OUR OBLIGATIONS  
to GOD our PRESERVER and BE-  
NEFACTOR.



PSALM lxxi. 5, 6.

*Thou art my Hope, O Lord God, Thou art  
my Trust from my Youth. By thee have I  
been holden up from the Womb; Thou art  
he, that took me out of my Mother's Bow-  
els: My Praise shall be continually of thee.*

THE Psalmist is here instructing,  
and leading us by his Example,  
to look back to the Original of  
our Being, and from thence trace  
and commemorate the Care and Goodness  
of God, which we have severally experien-  
ced from the Beginning of our Natural Lives  
to this Day.

IN a Former Discourse I have,

I. EN-

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- I. ENDEAVOURED to remove such unworthy Sentiments, as careless and perverse Minds may have conceived concerning God and his common Providence. And then proceeded,
- II. To a more particular Consideration of our Obligations to God, arising from the Original Gift of Being — and the subsequent Care of his good Providence, through the Whole of Life.

HERE I led back your Thoughts and Meditations.

FIRST, to the *Original Grant of Being* — that *first* and great Act of God upon us, when out of *Nothing* — out of *Non-entity*, he brought us into Being and Existence.

SECONDLY, I have considered the Rank we hold in the Scale and Order of Beings in God's Creation ; and the Powers and Capacities both of Mind and Body which our Creator has given us.

THIRDLY, the Nature and Form of this present World, or Part of God's immense Creation, into which we are born ; and our Situation

Situation in it. I now go on to put you upon considering,

FOURTHLY, The constant Care and good Providence of God, that has been exercised towards all, and every one of us, from the Beginning of our Natural Lives to this Day. Here we may adopt the Language, and ought to adopt the Spirit of the Psalmist in my Text, *Thou hast been my Hope, O Lord—God—Thou hast been my Trust from my Youth—By thee have I been holden up from the Womb, Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels; my Praise shall be continually of thee.* Or as he expresses the same Thought, *Psalms xxii. 9, 10. Thou art he that took me out of the Womb—Thou didst make me Hope, when I was upon my Mother's Breasts—I was cast upon thee, from the Womb—Thou hast been my God from my Mother's Belly.* This was the Case with every one of us. Let us ask ourselves in the Language of Job, but with a different Spirit, *Why did I not come from the Womb? Why did I not give up the Ghost, when I came out of the Belly? Why did the Knees prevent me? Or why the Breasts that I should suck? Why was I not carried from the Womb to the Grave?* The Answer is plain—  
All

All this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes. If it is thought, that this was owing to the Care and Tenderneſs of our Parents ; let us think again, Who inſpired them with this Spirit of *Parental Affection* ? Certainly God, their Father, and our Father ; their God, and our God. And let it not be ſaid, that this *Parental Care* is owing to the Laws of the State. There have been civilized States, where no ſuch Laws were enacted, but the Preſervation of their Infants was left to the free Will of the Parents, as their Education is now with us, whether they would at firſt *take up*\* their Children, or ſuffer them to periſh. Nor was this Want of a Civil Law owing to the Barbarity of thoſe States ; but to the Experience they had, that the God of Nature had made better Proviſion, than any poſitive Law could do ; and the Event proved it, ſince perhaps as few Infants periſhed there by being neglected or expoſed, as in our Nation at preſent, where the Murther of an Infant is juſtly puniſhed with the Death of the unnatural Parent or Murtherer.

NOR let this peculiar Parental Affection be aſcribed to *Cuſtom*, ſince we ſee it is *Univerſal*,

\* Tollere Liberos.

to God our Preserver and Benefactor.

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versal, like all the Laws of God and Nature, prevailing through all the Species of Animals, whose Offspring stand in need of such Aid. *Even the Sea-Monsters draw out the Breast, they give Suck to their Young Ones*; as the Prophet observes, when lamenting the unnatural Temper of some Parents in his Day. *How*, says he, *is the fine Gold become dim* — Think what he intends by this — It is this *Parental Affection* under Consideration, the noblest Principle in God's Creation — the planting of his own Right-Hand, to which it is owing, that we died not from the Womb. *How is the Gold become dim! How is the most fine Gold changed* — *Even the Sea-Monsters draw out the Breast, and give Suck to their Young Ones: But the Daughter of my People is become cruel, like the Ostrich in the Wilderness; whilst the Tongue of the sucking Child cleaveth to the Roof of its Mouth for Thirst. The Ostrich leaveth her Eggs in the Earth, and warmeth them in the Dust; forgetting that the Foot may crush them, or that the wild Beast may break them. She is hardened against her Young Ones, as though they were not hers: Because God hath deprived her of Wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her*  
Under-

Lam. iv.  
begin.

Job xxxix.  
14—17.

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*Understanding.* The Reason is this, Provision is made by the God of Nature for the Preservation of their Species, without any Care or Concern in the Old Ones for their Offspring. But where this is wanting, the Natural Affection is universally implanted.

No Creature is brought into Being, in a more naked, tender, and helpless Condition than Man: And the natural Provision, made for the Preservation of the Human Species, is not only the common Principle of Humanity, but this peculiar *Instinct of Parental Affection*. This is implanted deeper in Mankind, and continues much longer, than in any other Kind of Creatures; as our Offspring remain so much longer in a dependent, indigent State. God has proportioned the Degrees of his providential Care and Assistance to the Weakness and Exigency of all his Creatures; so that we are in the least Danger of perishing through Want, when we are the least able to provide for ourselves. In such Circumstances we may say, as *Abraham* did to *Isaac*, *My Son, GOD WILL PROVIDE*. God did provide for us, before we were born; and has done so ever since, of which we are this Day the living Monuments.



ments. The same provident Divine Hand, that infused Milk into our Mother's Breasts, infused the Parental Instinct into their Hearts. Hence the Sorrow and Pain is forgot, *for Joy that a Child is born into the World* — And hence the Prophet's Expostulation, *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb?* None but a Monster in Nature can do this — Our's did not; "They made suitable Provision for us against the Time of our Birth, and were the Means of bringing us into Life, to see the Light of this World, and enjoy those Blessings, which God has bestowed on Man — He delivered us into their Hands feeble, naked, and defenceless; needing many Things; not knowing what we needed, and incapable of doing any Thing for ourselves. Had they neglected us in these Circumstances, we had perished immediately, through Want and Inability. But they voluntarily took upon themselves the Burden of cherishing and defending us, which nothing but their vehement Love and natural Affection for us, could have rendered tolerable. Upon our Account they abridged themselves of

Isa. xlix.  
15.

“ many Enjoyments — To us they sacrificed  
 “ in many Instances their own Ease and Plea-  
 “ sures — For us they endured much La-  
 “ bour, and felt many an anxious Thought  
 “ — For us they have gone through endless  
 “ Hardships, by Day and by Night, with no  
 “ little Hazard of their Health, and even of  
 “ their Lives. In Infancy they nursed us —  
 “ In Sickneſs they attended us — In Sorrows  
 “ they comforted us — and always furniſh-  
 “ ed us with Food and Raiment ſuitable to  
 “ our Condition. All this they did — and  
 “ did it chearfully, for our Sakes, when we  
 “ had done Nothing for them — when we  
 “ knew not as yet our Guardians and Bene-  
 “ factors — when we did not ſo much as  
 “ aſk, or thank them for their Favours; and  
 “ this, when they had no Assurance they  
 “ ſhould ever receive any Recompence for  
 “ their Pains” \* — yea, deſiring nothing but  
 our Preſervation and Welfare. Now to what  
 Original Cauſe can all this be aſcribed, but  
 to God, to whom the Pſalmiſt aſcribes it; in  
 whoſe devout Language, all that I have ſaid  
 is briefly contained, *By thee have I been  
 holden up from the Womb; Thou art he that  
 took*

\* Holland's Sermons.

*to God our Preserver and Benefactor.*

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*took me out of my Mother's Bowels — Thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my Mother's Breasts.*

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AND let us not think, that the Care of Providence ended with our *Infancy*, or *Childhood*; and that we have been our own Preservers ever since. The Psalmist thought otherwise, when he not only says, *Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels, and causedst me to hope, when I was upon my Mother's Breasts*: But he adds, *By thee have I been holden up since — Thou hast been, and still art my Hope, O Lord God; Thou hast been my Trust from my Youth*. Did we grow in Stature, and our Powers and Abilities both of Body and Mind, increase with our Years — This again was the Lord's doing — for which of us ever did, or can add *one Cubit to our Stature*, or one Power either to our Minds or Bodies? *It is God, that giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and to them that have no Might, he increaseth Strength*. In short, we are, and have Nothing, but what we have received — Nothing, but what we have received from God.

Isa. xl. 29

AGAIN, let us not think, that we are now become *Independent, and Self-sufficient*.

None are more apt to fancy this, than Young Persons; though few of them maintain themselves, or get any Thing to this Purpose, for the first *twenty Years* of Life. Let us consider, if that was not, and is now, our own Case; and adore that Hand of Providence, to which we owe our Education and Maintenance, for so many Years, before we contributed any Thing to our own Support.

NOR let us think, we are become less dependent on the Care of God and his Providence since. As our Powers and Possessions have increased, our Wants have increased, and our Dangers multiplied. In the midst of Life we are in Death — One is dying on the Right-Hand, and another on the Left; and we as Mortal as any one of them. Think how many are dead, and gone out of this World, who came into it since you and I did; and then we shall need none to tell us, to whose Care we owe our Preservation. O let us think again, How many Dangers we have escaped, and how many Supplies and Blessings we have received from God in the Course of our Lives? *How many*, did I say? Impossible to tell — If I should attempt to count them, they are more in Number

ber than the Sands. The Moments that have passed since I was born, no Ways equal the Blessings that I have received from God, in whom we all live, and move, and have our Being. O my Soul, what Tribute is due to God, for all this Care and Goodness of his, which has constantly attended me from the Beginning of my Natural Life to this Day! *My Mouth shall shew forth thy Righteousness and thy Salvation all the Day; for I know not the Numbers thereof.*

Psal. lxxi.  
15.

HITHERTO I have called to Remembrance the Blessings, which ALL of us in common have received from God.

LET us now proceed to take proper Notice of the *Special* and *Extraordinary* Mercies, which we have received. Here then let us briefly consider, *Wherein we differ* — and *Who maketh us to differ*. Though my Text does not so directly lead to this, yet in other Places, we often find the Psalmist making these the Subject of his devout Meditations. If we forget our *Extraordinary* Mercies, we shall be apt to forget or overlook our *Ordinary* Ones.

FIRST then, Are we favoured with any Natural Advantages of Body, or Endowments

of Mind, above many of our Fellow-Men? Let us be thankful to God for them, saying, by the Gift and *Grace of God, I am, what I am.* Many we behold born with a weak and tender Constitution — Others Imperfect and Infirm — Some are born deaf and dumb; others blind. But not to enlarge upon such unhappy Defects, as in some Respects diminish the Happiness of this Life, when springing from such a Root — Had we the Happiness to be born into Life, with all the Limbs and Senses perfect? — And has this Infant Body grown up to Maturity of Strength and Stature, fit for Labour, and capable of useful Service? Are we in this Respect Vessels of Honour filled for our Creator's Use? Oh, what Reason have we to be thankful! and to say with the Psalmist, *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully made — marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well.* — *Thine Eyes did see my Substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in Continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

BUT, What is a perfect and well formed Human Body deprived of Reason? What, but the most piteous Object upon Earth? If  
then



then our Intellectual Faculties are sound and perfect, in a Degree common to Man ; and especially if we are blessed with any *Superior* Degrees of Genius, such as a clear Perception — a tenacious Memory — a solid Judgment — a sedate Temper — and a steadfast Mind. — These are the Gifts of God resulting from the Mould, in which we were formed, by his All-creating Hand. If we have made any additional Improvement, as doubtless is expected in Proportion to the Talents we are entrusted with, yet the *Original* Talents are all from God, whether *one*, or *five*, or *ten*, and claim proportionable Gratitude and Praise.

SECONDLY, Have these Original Gifts been preserved to us for so many Years ? Has God *redeemed us from Destruction, and crowned us with loving Kindness and tender Mercy ? Has our Food been given us, and our Raiment sure ?* Though perpetually surrounded with Diseases and Death ; and beset with Dangers which we could neither foresee nor prevent — Is Life still spared ? — Health continued ? — Our Bones kept, and not one of them broken ? — Our Reason and Senses preserved to us ? — and does our Bow still abide in

Strength? O the wonderful! O the adorable Care and Goodness of God!

THIRDLY, The special Advantages arising to us from our Parents, and Natural Relations, should ever be remembered with all due Gratitude and Praise to God; who ordered our Descent, and gave us, and not others, to be their Children, and Heirs to all the Privileges and Advantages of such Relationship. Our *Birth-right is the Gift of God* — Towards this, we ourselves contributed Nothing. Had we then the Happiness to be descended from honest, creditable, and good Parents? and were we born Heirs to the Fruit of their Labours, or to any Family-Title, or Estate? Here is particular Reason for Gratitude; but none for Pride or Disdain. In this Case, *What hast thou, that thou hast not received? Or why boastest thou thyself, as if thou hadst not received it? And who was it that made thee to differ?* Are we descended from Christian Parents, who gave us a pious Education, and took Care to train and fit us for farther Improvement and Usefulness in Life? All these, and such like, are Circumstances connected with our Birth, which ought to be frequently

frequently and thankfully remembered. And such Remembrance will directly lead us to see our Obligations to God, *Who hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men, who dwell on the Face of the Earth — and hath settled the Bounds of their Habitation.* — And is mine agreeable, and preferable to that of many others? I will say with the devout Psalmist, *The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance; thou maintainest my Lot. The Lines are fallen unto me in pleasant Places; yea, I have a goodly Heritage.*

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Acts xvii.  
26.

Psal. xvi.  
5, 6.

FOURTHLY, Have *Accessions* been made in the Course of Providence, to these Original Blessings? Has God prospered our Labours, and blessed our Endeavours? Has he raised us up from our low Estate, and done great and unexpected Things for us, whereof we are glad? Though here we may have bore some Part ourselves, yet upon a fair Computation, we shall see Reason to give God the Glory of all — to whom we have been indebted for the constant Preservation of all our Powers; and the Blessings of his Providence, attendant upon our Labours. It is recorded to God's Praise, *He chose David his Servant, and took him from the Sheep-Folds*

Psalms  
lxxviii.  
70, 71.

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IX.

Genesis  
xxxii.  
9, 10.

*Folds — He brought him to feed Jacob his People, and Israel his Inheritance.* And have we been favoured with any Additions to our Original Stock of Divine Blessings? Instead of being ashamed of our Original, let us cultivate the Spirit of Father Jacob, when he thus addresses himself to God, *O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my Father Isaac! The Lord which said unto me, return unto thy Country, and to thy Kindred, and I will deal well with thee — I am not worthy of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth which thou hast shewed unto thy Servant! For with my Staff (with nothing but my Staff) I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two Bands.* O let us but consider what we are *now*, and what we were, and I think it impossible for most of us to stop the Overflowings of Gratitude and Adoration: — Especially if we call to mind,

FIFTHLY, The *Dangers* through which we have passed, and the *Difficulties* we have met with in our Passage through Life. It is a Miracle of Mercy, and the clearest Proof of Divine Providence, that we are still the Living to praise God. How often have You, and I, been brought low, and God has raised

us

us up? Let each of us recollect our own Deliverances, and we shall say with the Psalmist, *I love the Lord, because he hath heard my Voice and my Supplications — because he hath inclined his Ear unto me; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The Sorrows of Death compassed me, and the Pains of Death gat hold upon me — I found Trouble and Sorrow — Then called I upon the Name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my Soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful — I was brought low, and he helped me — Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my Soul from Death, mine Eyes from Tears, and my Feet from falling — What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his Benefits towards me? O Lord truly I am thy Servant — I am thy Servant — thou hast loosed my Bonds.*

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Psal. cxvi.  
1—16.

PERMIT me to add, That this is not only the Duty of the Rich, and Healthful, who stand in Need of Nothing; but likewise of the Poor and Infirm. The Care and Providence of God is particularly apparent in the Preservation of the Poor and Needy. You, who are unknown, and yet well known

to

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to God — *as dying, and behold ye live — as chastened, and not killed — as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing — as having Nothing — and yet possessing all Things.* — O ye dear Souls, *My Mouth is open unto you, my Heart is enlarged. I speak as unto my Children, be ye also enlarged.* God has been your Hope and your Trust from your Youth up — By him you have been holden up from the Womb — He has been your God from your Mother's Belly. Say then, *Why art thou cast down O my Soul, Why art thou disquieted within me? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the Health of my Countenance, and my God.* He chooses the Poor of this World, who are rich in Faith, to be Heirs of his Kingdom. Your Heavenly Father knoweth what you stand in Need of; and if you seek his Kingdom and the Righteousness thereof, these Things shall be added unto you.

I HAVE thus put you upon calling to Remembrance the Experience you have had of the constant Care and Goodness of God, from the first Moment of your coming into Being to this Day. In doing this, I hope I have been contributing to the best Interests of your Souls; and I trust, that you have felt  
the



the Workings of true Piety in your own Hearts. Speaking from Experience I say it, there is Nothing gives such Evidence of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as a Survey of this Kind. At other Times, we hear of God with the Hearing of the Ear ; but here the *Eye sees*, and the *Soul feels* him. *He is not far from every One of us ; for we are his Offspring ; and in him we all live, and move, and have our Being.* Nor does any Thing sink my Soul to that *Depth* of true Humility — or raise my Mind to that Height of true Devotion, like ascending up to God, in such commemorative Meditations; and from thence looking down upon myself from on high — and looking back, and tracing the Footsteps and Series of Divine Providence, to the first Original of my Existence — I then behold myself the Offspring of God, and the constant Care of my Heavenly Father — though less than the least of all his Mercies.

THE Uses proper to be made of all that has been said, are two.

FIRST, This former Experience of the Hand and Care of God, is improvable by the Servants of God, as a Ground of *future Hope*;  
even

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even under the Infirmities of Age. I shall not enlarge upon this at present, as I intend to consider it in my next Discourse to you, from Verses 17, 18. of this Psalm, *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works — Now also, when I am Old, and gray-beaded, O God, forsake me not.*

SECONDLY, All that has been said should be converted into the Sacrifice of Praise to God — being the chief Return that we are capable of rendering to him for all his Mercies. Thus concludes my Text, *My Praise shall be continually of thee.* Here again I shall not enlarge, for this Reason — Praise and Adoration is the proper Part, not of the *Sermon*, but of the other Parts of our Publick Devotion, to which, my Sermon, I hope, has been a Preparative. Nor should our Praise be confined to our Publick Worship — nor to the Sabbath-Day. We should praise God every Day, and every Night — every Morning, and every Evening — when we lye down, and when we rise up. — We should praise him in our Out-going, and In-coming — yea, in the Night-Watches, our Thoughts and our Hearts should be up to God.

*to God our Preserver and Benefactor.*

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God. — *My Praise shall be CONTINUALLY of thee. We should Praise him with our Hearts — and with our Lips — Speaking to ourselves in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs — singing and making Melody in our Hearts to the Lord. — Giving Thanks always for all Things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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Eph. v.

19.

WITH this Spirit let us now set forth God's Praise, singing the following Hymn, suggested by the Psalm, from which I have been discoursing.

WHEN all thy Mercies, O my God,  
My rising Soul surveys;  
Transported with the View I am lost  
In Wonder, Love, and Praise.

O how shall Words with equal Warmth,  
The Gratitude declare,  
That glows within my ravish'd Heart!  
But thou canst read it there.

Thy Providence my Life sustain'd,  
And all my Wants redrest,  
When in the silent Womb I lay,  
And hung upon the Breast.

To

To all my weak Complaints and Cries  
Thy Mercy lent an Ear,  
E'er yet my feeble Thoughts had learnt  
To form themselves in Prayer.

Unnumber'd Comforts to my Soul,  
Thy tender Care bestow'd,  
Before my Infant-Heart conceiv'd,  
From whom those Comforts flow'd.

When in the slipp'ry Paths of Youth,  
With heedless Steps I ran,  
Thine Arm unseen convey'd me safe,  
And led me up to Man.

Thro' hidden Dangers, Toils, and Death,  
It gently clear'd my Way,  
And thro' the pleasing Snares of Vice,  
More to be fear'd than they.

When worn with Sicknes oft hast thou  
With Health renew'd my Face,  
And when in Sin and Sorrows sunk  
Reviv'd my Soul with Grace.

Ten thousand thousand precious Gifts,  
My Daily Thanks employ,

Nor

*to God our Preserver and Benefactor.*

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Nor is the least a chearful Heart,  
That tastes those Gifts with Joy.

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Through ev'ry Period of my Life,  
Thy Goodness I'll pursue,  
And after Death in distant Worlds  
The glorious Theme renew.

When Nature fails, and Day and Night  
Divide thy Works no more,  
My ever grateful Heart, O Lord,  
Thy Mercy shall adore.

Through all Eternity to thee  
A joyful Song I'll raise,  
For Oh! Eternity's too short  
To utter all thy Praise.



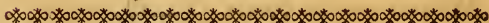
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SER-



## S E R M O N X.

The Goodness of GOD in FORMER  
LIFE, a Ground of Encourage-  
ment in OLD-AGE.



PSALM lxxi. 17, 18.

*O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth,  
and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous  
Works — Now also, when I am Old and  
gray-beaded, O God, forsake me not ; until  
I have shewed thy Strength to this Genera-  
tion, and thy Power to every one, that is  
to come.*

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THE Mercies of God, which are  
constantly bestowed upon us,  
through the Course of our Lives,  
claim, not only our *present* No-  
tice, but likewise our After-Remembrance,  
and grateful Acknowledgments. Such Gra-  
titude





firmities of Old-Age — and in the near and certain Prospects of approaching Death.

To this SECOND I now proceed — which I cannot but look upon as one of the most interesting, important, and useful Subjects, that can possibly be took under Consideration — a Subject, that claims the Regard of All, whether *Old* or *Young*, as will appear in the Process of my Discourse; the Subject of which, will help to guide our present Thoughts — *O God thou hast taught me from my Youth — and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works — Now also, when I am Old and gray-beaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy Strength to this Generation, and thy Power to every One that is to come.*

IN meditating upon this Subject, observe with me,

I. THE *Age*, and *Circumstances* of the Psalmist, when he indulged to these serious Thoughts. He was then *Old and gray-beaded*, as he mentions in my Text. *Now also, when I am OLD AND GRAY-HEADED, O God, forsake me not.* And again, Ver. 8. *Cast me not off in time of Old-Age; forsake me*

*me not, when my Strength faileth.* How old he was, is not said — Nor is it material. — But the *Symptoms* of Old-Age are specified, particularly *a Decay of Strength, and Gray-Hairs.* These are the natural Indications of Old-Age. — The Mementos and Messengers, which God has sent to remind us of approaching Death. They are Companions that always attend the Aged and Infirm, who cannot look themselves in the Face, but they look Death in the Face too — In-  
somuch that it is mentioned as an Argument of Stupidity, *when Gray-Hairs appears here and there, and we perceive them not.*

Now as God has appointed these Symptoms of Old-Age, as the Forerunners of approaching Death, so it is evidently his Will and Intention, that they should remind us to look forward to Death — to think of leaving this World, and prepare for another.

WE are never far from Death. The whole Life of Man is short — it is *but as a Vapour*: But when *Childhood, Youth, and Manhood*, are all spent out, and gone — when Strength fails — the Head is grown Gray — and the Man old — then Death can be at no great Distance. Nor is this the only

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Pfal. xc.  
10.

Ecclef. xii.  
1.

awful Thought, that claims our Notice; but, when this is the Case, what little of Life still remains, we may reasonably conclude, will yield us little, very little, sensual and worldly Pleasure. *The Days of our Years are Threescore Years and ten; and if by Reason of Strength they be Fourscore Years, yet is their Strength Labour and Sorrow.* When Strength decays, generally the Senses, Appetites, Relishes, and even the Desires of Life fail. Hence the Wise Man's Advice, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.* We have thus observed the *Age and Circumstances* of the Psalmist, when he indulged to these serious Thoughts. Let us now consider,

II. THE *Two Things*, which the Psalmist was principally concerned about. FIRST, To secure the Presence of God, and the Supports of true Piety and Religion, under these Decays of Nature, and the Infirmities of Age — *Now also when I am Old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.* His next Concern appears to be this — To exhibit  
such

such a Pattern of aged Piety, as might give Glory to God — derive Credit upon Religion — and both encourage and excite such as succeeded him in the World, to choose God and Religion for their chief Portion. *O God, forsake me not — until I have shewed thy Strength to this Generation, and thy Power to every one that is to come.* These, my Brethren, are the two great Concernments of every one — they ought to be so — and especially of the Aged and Infirm.

FIRST, To secure the Presence of God, and the Supports of true Piety and Religion, especially under the Decays of Nature, and the Infirmities of Age. *Now also, when I am Old, and gray-headed, forsake me not — Cast me not off in Time of Old-Age, forsake me not when my Strength faileth.* The true genuine Supports of Religion, and Consolations of Piety, resulting from a pure, lively, steadfast, well-grounded Hope in God, are at all Times, and in all Seasons of Life, greatly desirable. — But they are especially desirable in Time of *Old-Age* — under the Decays of Nature, and the Presages of approaching Death — For this obvious Reason — Because in these Circumstances, the *Old Man* hath

little, or Nothing left besides, for the Support and Comfort of his Mind. His Capacity and Relish for *earthly* Joys is gone — his old Friends and Acquaintance are most or all of them, gone to the Grave before him ; or are dispersed at a Distance — A new Generation is risen up, who have little Knowledge of him, or Acquaintance with him. Perhaps his Relations are grown weary of him, and think it long before he free them from the Trouble of his Infirmities, and leave them in full Possession of his Substance. Or if his former Usefulness, and present amiable Qualities, still endear him to his Relations and Friends, and secure their tenderest and kindest Offices, (as indeed they ought) yet alas, they are but miserable and helpless Comforters. They cannot redeem from Death — they cannot repair the Decays of Nature, nor bear him up under the tedious Infirmities of Age. It is, my Friends, the true genuine Spirit of Piety and Religion — It is this, and this only, that can be the Staff and Support of the Aged Saint. The daily and inward Language of his pious Soul is this, *Whom, O God, have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth to be desired*



*fired besides thee: My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever. Or as in my Text, Now I am Old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not. Cast me not off in the Time of Old-Age, forsake me not, now my Strength faileth.*

To his ancient Servants in a *peculiar* and *immediate* Sense, *God is All in All*. He is so indeed to *all* his Servants, as all their Supplies and Blessings are derived from him. — But the *Aged* and *Infirm*, who are incapacitated for relishing worldly Comforts, and the Sources of second Causes are stopped, all their chief Supports and Consolations are derived *immediately* from God himself — His *Hand holds their Souls in Life, and his Visitation preserves their Spirits* — He is the *immediate* Strength of their Souls — *In his Favour consists their Life, and his Loving Kindness is better than Life*. The Light of his Countenance, and the Consolations of his free Spirit support their Souls — give them Joy in believing, and enable their Spirits to bear all their bodily Infirmities. They reflect with Gratitude upon the former Gifts of God's Goodness, and Pledges of his Love ;  
and

and in the lively Exercise of chearful Hope and stedfast Faith, they rejoice in View of the Glory of God ready to be revealed. And with Regard to the Pains and Infirmities of Age, all witnessing, that the Time of their Departure is near, this is their Language, *None of these Things move me, neither do I count this Life dear to myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy. I am passing thro' the Valley of Death, but my God is with me — his Rod and his Staff support and comfort me.*

THUS the *first* and great Concern of the Aged Saint is to secure the Presence of God, and the Supports of true Piety and Religion, under the Decays of Nature and Infirmities of Age. The Psalmist's next and great Concern was this,

SECONDLY, To exhibit such a Pattern of Aged Piety, as might give Glory to God — derive Credit upon Religion — and both encourage and excite Successors, to choose God and Religion for their chief Portion.—*O God, forsake me not, till I have shewed thy Strength to this Generation, and thy Power to every one that is to come.* Here, I say, you will easily observe, that the Psalmist's great Concern appears

appears to be this — to secure the Presence and Assistance of God in this last Stage of Life; and this, not only for his *own* Sake, but likewise out of Regard to the Glory of God — the Credit of Religion — and the Benefit of Posterity. His Fear was, lest under the Infirmities of Age, and the Prospects of approaching Death, he should sink into Peevishness, or Discontent; or any Way shew a Dissatisfaction with the Appointments of Providence in the concluding Part of Life. On the contrary, his Concern was, that his last Days might be his best Days — that when incapacitated for serving God and his Generation in a more *active* Capacity, he might still glorify God, and benefit the World, by exhibiting an eminent Pattern of *Passive* Virtues, and Suffering Piety; by possessing his Soul in Patience, and discovering the peculiar Powers and Consolations of Piety and Religion, even in the most awful and trying Season, when Flesh and Heart otherwise fail. And let me tell you, we never behold so much of the true Power, and Perfection of Religion, nor does the Man of God ever appear with so much true Dignity and Advantage, as in this last Scene  
of

of Life, when Faith and Patience have their perfect Work, and shine forth in all their proper Fruits and Effects. When the Aged Saint, labouring under the Decays of Nature, is still *cheerful, easy, meek, patient, resigned*, — pleased with this Life and World — reflecting with Gratitude upon what God has *formerly* bestowed on him, and done for him — and still better pleased with what lies before him — rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God, ready to be revealed.

To omit many other Instances, let me point you to the Case of the Apostle *Paul*. The most affecting Scene in the History of his Life, where he acts his Part with the greatest Dignity, and draws forth the Admiration and Tears of his attending Audience, you have *Acts* xx. 17—end. When at *Miletus*, he sent for the Elders of *Ephesus*, in order to take his last Farewel of them — Where having first reminded them of his *past* Life and Manners, he adds, *And now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the Things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me: But none of these Things move me, neither*  
count

*count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my Face no more. Wherefore I take you to Record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God. — And now Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified. — And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all; and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's Neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all, for the Words which he spake, that they should see his Face no more. Read from Verse 17, to the End.*

How moving likewise is the Story of Father Jacob, when blessing his Children, and taking his last Farewel — particularly when he laid his Hand, on the Heads of his Grand-Children, and said, *The God before whom my Fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk — The God, which has fed me all my Life long unto this*

*this Day. The Angel, which redeemed me from all Evil,* BLESS THE LADS. Such a friendly Representation of God and Religion, in these Circumstances, is *shewing God's Strength to this Generation, and his Power to such as are to come.*

WHEN an Aged Minister or Parent, behaves thus in the decline of Life, what Power and Influence is here! to inspire his Descendants with religious Purposes and Resolves, saying, *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee, my Father's God, and I will exalt thee.* In this the real Sovereignty and Worth of true Religion appears, that it is a Consolation and Support, even in Old-Age, when all other Consolations vanish; and when inward Supports are most wanted. Let us now further Remark,

III. FROM *Whence* the Aged Psalmist derived the Grounds of his Encouragement, that God would thus grant him his Presence and Supports in the Close of Life. And here again the Grounds of his Encouragement are TWO.

FIRST, The pleasing Remembrance of his early and persevering Piety and Virtue.

And



And *Secondly*, The Remembrance of the constant Care and Faithfulness of God, which he had all along experienced, from the Beginning of his Natural Life to that Day. Both these he jointly pleads with God in my Text, in the most affectionate Manner; in Order still further to strengthen his Heart, and cherish his lively Hope and Trust in God. *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works* — from whence he pleads, *Now also when I am old and gray-beaded, O God forsake me not.* The first Ground of Encouragement is this,

1<sup>st</sup>, The pleasing Remembrance of his *early and persevering Piety and Virtue.* *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth — and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works.* As if he had said, “O God, I was  
“early brought to the Knowledge of thy  
“Name, and to the Knowledge of thy  
“Will — Early principled with the Fear of  
“God, which is the Beginning of Wisdom.  
“— I have ever since made it my Practice  
“to keep thy Commands, and praise thy  
“Name. Though amidst many Imperfec-  
“tions, yet I have all my Life long, made  
“thy

*The Goodness of God in Former Life,*

“ thy Will and Service my chief Concern.

“ — *Thou hast taught me from my Youth, and*

“ *hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works.*

“ — *And now when I am Old and gray-head-*

“ *ed, O God, forsake me not — I know thou*

“ *wilt not.*” O my Friends, Nothing yields;

Nothing can yield, such Satisfaction in Time

of Old-Age, as the Remembrance of a well

improved, and well spent Life : — Nor can

any Thing yield such Dissatisfaction, as the

Consciousness of a mis-spent Life. The

sooner we are brought to the Knowledge

and Fear of God — and the longer, and more

carefully we have lived in the Practice of

Virtue and Piety — I say, the sooner this

was begun — and the *longer* it has been per-

sisted in, the better. *The Fruit of Righte-*

*ousness is Peace, and the Effect of it is Quiet-*

*ness and Assurance for ever.*

YOUTH is the proper Seed-Time — *Man-*

*hood* the Season for growing to Maturity —

and *Old-Age* the Time of Harvest. Such

Servants of God as these, *shall come to their*

*Graves in a full Age, as a Shock of Corn*

*cometh in, in its Season.* Hence the Preacher

advises, in order to be prepared for meeting

Old-Age with Comfort, *Remember now thy*

*Creator*

Creator in the Days of thy Youth. And this the Apostle Paul tells us was the Ground of his Support and Comfort under the near Prospect of approaching Death, *The Testimony of a good Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, he had had his Conversation in the World.* This he tells young Timothy for his Encouragement, *I am now ready to be offered, and the Time of my Departure is at hand — I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course — I have kept the Faith — henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing.* If in the Close of Life, our Hearts condemn us not, but bear a fair Testimony to a well-spent Life, then shall we have Rejoicing in Ourselves, and have Confidence towards God; *who is not unfaithful to forget our Work or Labour of Love.* In one Word, God never forgets, he never forsakes his faithful Servants, when they are Old. This is the first Ground of Hope.

2 Cor. i.  
12.

2 Tim. iv.  
4, 6, 7, 8.

Heb. vi.  
10.

2dly, THE SECOND Ground of the Aged Psalmist's Encouragement, was the pleasing Remembrance of the constant Care and

Q

Faith.

*The Goodness of God in Former Life,*

Faithfulness of God, which he had all along experienced, from the Beginning of his Natural Life to that Day. *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works — Now also, when I am Old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.* Thus again, Ver. 5. *Thou art my Hope, O Lord God; thou art my Trust from my Youth. — By thee have I been holden up from the Womb — thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Bowels — my Praise shall be continually of thee; — I am a Wonder unto many — but thou art my strong Refuge; let my Mouth be filled with thy Praise, and with thy Honour all the Day.* It follows, *Cast me not off in Time of Old-Age, forsake me not, when my Strength faileth.* And thus in the Verse after my Text, *Thy Righteousness, O God, is very high, who hast done great Things — O God, who is like unto thee — Thou which hast shewed me great and sore Troubles, (and supported me under them) shalt quicken me again, and bring me up again, from the Depths of the Earth.*

It would be endless to turn you to all the Passages in Scripture, where the Servants of God plead God's former Mercies, as a  
Ground

Ground of *future* Hope; and particularly under the Infirmities of Age, and the Prospects of Death.

AND how just and reasonable a Ground of Encouragement is this? Is not this the *Natural* Foundation of our Hope and Trust in all Cases of Want and Danger? Is not this the Reason, why we repair with cheerful Hope to our old Friends and kind Benefactors? Is not this the Encouragement with Children to repair to their Earthly Parents, whose Care and Faithfulness they have constantly experienced through the whole of Life? And tell me, if all the Children and Servants of God have not far better Reason of this Sort to repair to God, their Heavenly Father? Sure I am, we have the clearest Evidence of his All-sufficiency and Goodness, and have had the largest Experience of his Care and Faithfulness. You who are now *Old and gray-beaded*, have had the *longest* and *largest* Experience of all. The Day would fail me, if I should attempt a Detail. Permit me however to remind you, the aged Servants of God, that you stand in the *nearest* and most *interesting* Relation to God, both by Nature, and by Grace — He



made you at first, and has had a constant Respect to the Work of his own Hand. — His Hand has constantly held your Souls in Life — His Mercies are, and have been, new every Morning, great is his Faithfulness, which you have so long experienced. Do but think What Stages and States of Life you have passed through — What Supplies and Assistances you have wanted, from the Time of Infancy to Old-Age, all which have been seasonably imparted; of which you are this Day, the living Monuments — I say, consider this, and then tell me, If you have the least Reason to doubt of God's providing for you, the Support of your Age, and carrying you safe through the short Remainder of Life? What could God have done more for you, than what he has done? If *Sixty, Seventy, or Eighty* Years Experience of his Care and Faithfulness, in Conjunction with all his Promises, and the Gift of his own Son, will not convince you, What will? Hitherto, as your Day, such has your Strength been; and doubt not, you will find it so to the End. You do not need more Supplies from God, to support you under the Infirmities of Age, than you did in the Weakness of Infancy, the  
Care-



Carelessness of Youth, or the Toils and Business of Manhood. But, if you did, in this Case there is no Difference; for *with God all possible Things are equally possible*. The Truth is, you have heretofore stood in need of many more Supplies, in the *former* Part of Life, than you will need in the Decline. In Proportion to the Decay of your Abilities, God gives you a Quietus and Dismission from *Active* Services; and abates the Force of those animal Propensities and Powers, which it has cost you so much Care and Pains to keep under due Subjection, and Regulation.

YOUR immediate Concerns now are less with the World, and more with God and your own Souls. Your chief Business is to possess your Souls with Patience; that your Spirits may bear all your Infirmities — And to cheer your Hearts with the Thoughts of what God has done for you through Life; and what better Things he has reserved for you, ready to be revealed. Let me tell you, you have no Reason to repine at your present Lot; as if your *best* Days were past, and the *worst* come on — If it be not your own Fault, your *best* Days are now — your Lot being the best adapted to reconcile you to the Law of

your Nature—to render you thoroughly willing to part with this Life and World—to teach you to live with God *here*, and thus stand prepared for living with him *hereafter*. These Infirmities of Age, if rightly improved, are light Afflictions, but for a Moment, which are working out for you a Preparation for leaving this World, and entering upon a better. A due Consideration of what God has done for you through Life, has a Tendency to teach you all this, and much more.

I HAVE thus considered these *two* Sources, from whence the Aged Servants of God are directed in my Text, to derive their Hope and Trust in God—assuring their Hearts before him, that he will not forsake them now they are Old. (1.) The Remembrance of their own former Piety and well-spent Life. (2.) The Remembrance of God's former Mercies and Faithfulness.

LET me only add, That if Time would have allowed, I might have shewn the farther Assurances which Aged Christians have *now*, resulting from God's exceeding great and precious Promises, in Conjunction with the Riches of his Grace in Christ Jesus, by whom Life and Immortality is now so fully brought

brought to Light. But this is what my present Subject does not lead to, nor will my Time permit.

Now to draw towards a Conclusion. — Behold here the Excellency and Perfection of true Religion! which secures to us the Favour and Assistance of God in every Time of Need — This will stand us in stead, when every Thing else fails — This will be a Staff and Support in Old-Age; and when Flesh and Heart fails, this will be the Strength of our Souls. This shews that Religion is the *One Thing Needful* — the true Riches; — yea, this shews its Importance and All-sufficiency.

THIS methinks should recommend Religion to the Choice of the Young; who should make it their early and persevering Care, would they reap the happy Fruits of it, when they come to be Old — Or in the Decline of Life, if summoned to meet Death sooner.

AND as for you, who are *now Old and gray-beaded*, be not anxious, be not discouraged; but *lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees*. The God whom you serve, is a faithful, and All-sufficient God. Remember how he proclaimed him-

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Isa. xlv. 3.

self of old by the Prophet, *Hearken unto me, O House of Jacob, and all the Remnant of the House of Israel, which are born by me from the Belly, which are carried from the Womb : Even to Old-Age, I am He, and even to Hoar-Hairs will I carry you — I have made, and I will bear — even I will carry, and will deliver you. Fear not, thou Worm Jacob, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will keep thee, yea, I will keep thee.* The xlth Chapter of the same Prophecy begins, *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my People, saith your God. — And it concludes, Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the Ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is he weary? He giveth Power to the Faint, and to them that have no Might, he increaseth Strength. — Even the Youths shall faint and be weary, and the Young Men shall utterly fall : But they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their Strength : They shall mount up with Wings as Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* Attend again to the Psalmist's Consolations, *The Righteous shall flourish like the Palm-Tree : He shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon. — Those that be planted in the House*  
of

Psal. xcii.  
13—15.

*of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God. They shall bring forth Fruit in Old-Age; They shall be fat and flourishing: To shew that the Lord is upright: He is my Rock, and there is no Unrighteousness in him.*

PERMIT me in the Conclusion, to refer your Thoughts to the Case and Conduct of our blessed Saviour, under the Approach of his last Sufferings and painful Death — And do not think it betrays any unbecoming Weakness, any Dread of Death itself, or Unwillingness to leave this World, when he says, *John xii. 27. Now is my Soul troubled.* Consider but the Torture and Agony, that must attend the *Kind*, and *Manner* of his Death, and you will see enough to account for the Agony of his Body, and this Trouble of his Soul. He had not been MAN, nor could his Death have afforded that Support and Encouragement, which at present may be drawn from it, if he had been unmoved and unconcerned. In truth, he was made like unto us, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. Ver. 23. he says, *The Hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified* — adding, Ver. 27, *Now is my Soul troubled.* In the former Words, he discovers

vers

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X.

vers himself pleased with the Thought, that the Time of his Departure was at Hand. — In the *latter*, he shews a just and natural Horror at the Thoughts, not of Death, but of the Previous Torture; adding, *What shall I say? Shall I say, Father save me from this Hour? No; for this Cause came I to this Hour — but this I say, Father glorify thy Name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. — Now mark what follows, Ver. 30. Jesus answered and said, this Voice came, not because of Me, but for your Sakes. — And it is now recorded for the Sake of all, that should believe in him. Our dear Saviour was heard in that he feared — A Messenger was sent from Heaven to strengthen him — He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. The last Words that he spoke, were these, IT IS FINISHED — FATHER INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT; and having said this, he bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghost. All this he did and suffered for our Sakes, that by Death he might deliver them, who through Fear of Death, were all their Life-Time subject to Bondage. In Death itself there is now*  
Nothing,

Heb. v. 7.

Luke xxii.  
43.

Heb. ii.  
15.



Nothing, that needs be terrible to the faithful and good Christian. More terrible Circumstances cannot possibly attend any one of us, than what our dear Saviour was enabled to endure; and what were made to work together for his good. Nor have we Reason to expect any Thing near so dreadful. —

Be that as it will, *God is faithful, who will not suffer any one of his Servants to be tried above his Ability; but with every Trial will find a Way for his Escape, that he may be able to bear it.* If we do not separate ourselves from the Love of God *during Life, Death, instead of separating us, will unite us to God for ever.* These Pains of Death, which are *but for a Moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* That God, who has glorified his Name upon us, through Life, will glorify it again. The same Heavenly Father, who supported and comforted his Son Jesus, will support and comfort all his Children, when they come to die. So that we may now boldly say, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Therefore my beloved Brethren, be ye  
*stedfast,*

1 Cor. x.  
13.

*The Goodness of God in Former Life, &c.  
stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the  
Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that  
your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

## I.

**M**Y Father, my Almighty Friend,  
When I begin thy Praise,  
Where will the growing Numbers end,  
The Numbers of thy Grace.

## II.

My Flesh was fashion'd by thy Pow'r,  
With all these Limbs of mine;  
And from my Mother's painful Hour,  
I've been intirely thine.

## III.

Still has my Life new Wonders seen  
Repeated every Year:  
Behold my Days that yet remain,  
I trust them to thy Care.

## IV.

Cast me not off, when Strength declines,  
When Hoary Hairs arise;  
And round me let thy Glory shine,  
Whene'er thy Servant dies.



# S E R M O N XI.

The RETURNS due to GOD for ALL  
his BENEFITS.



PSALM cxvi. 12.

*What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his  
Benefits towards me?*

HO the *Author* of this *Psalms*  
W was, or upon what Occasion it  
was composed, is left uncertain.

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If we understand it as containing  
the History of some particular Person, it  
then shews, that the Author had newly, e-  
scaped some eminent Danger, or recovered  
from some Affliction, that had brought him  
to the Gates of Death; and composed this  
*Psalms*, whilst his pious Soul was full of de-  
vout Amazement and Gratitude; and at a  
Loss, *What to render to the Lord for all his  
Benefits.*

*Benefits.* But as Instances of such awakening Providences are so frequent, I think it is more proper to interpret this Psalm, as purposely intended to direct and assist the Servants of God in their Improvement of all those Dispensations, which are of an affecting and awakening Nature.

WHEN the Words of our *Text* are considered in Connection with what precedes, we are led to observe, That near escapes from impending Dangers, or extraordinary Recoveries from threatening Disorders, ought to be looked upon as great Benefits received from God, and call for a proper and grateful Return. But then, these are not all; nor the chief Benefits, that we have to be thankful for. Preservation from Dangers and Diseases, is certainly a more desirable Mercy and Blessing, than Deliverance and Recovery from them.

Ask yourselves, Which of the two you would rather choose, and you will need no other Proof, but the Answer of your own Hearts. But the Case is, we stupid ungrateful Mortals, seldom know the Worth of our Mercies, till we feel the Want of them: When they are restored, it is like Life from  
the

the Dead. Then we not only feel the Benefit of recovering Mercies; but are led to see the Blessing of former Health and Safety. As in my *Text*, it is not said, What shall I render unto the Lord for this *late* Recovery and Preservation? But, *What shall I render unto the Lord for ALL his Benefits?* This is the Language of a pious Soul, filled with a due Sense of the Goodness of God; overwhelmed with Gratitude; and at a Loss, what worthy and suitable Returns to make, for so many, so great, and so gracious Blessings received from God.

When all thy Mercies, O my God,  
My rising Soul surveys,  
Transported with the View I'm lost  
In Wonder, Love, and Praise.

THE devout *Question* of the *Psalmist* now before us, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits*, is made up of these *three* Ingredients.

I. A LIVELY, affectionate, and grateful Sense of the Goodness of God towards him.

II. A

II. A READINESS and Disposition of Mind to make all possible Returns to God for all his Benefits; esteeming nothing too dear or great to part with, and every Thing in his Power due to God. But then,

III. IT shews the *Psalmist* at a Loss *what* Returns he should fix upon, that were most reasonable and fit in themselves, and at the same Time, in some Measure answerable to all the Benefits he had so freely and graciously received from God.

ALL these shew the proper Disposition of a grateful Heart, in like Circumstances. And no Wonder he should thus find himself at a Loss : For though this Temper is Natural, is Reasonable, and due to God, yet alas ! we have it not in our Power *to be serviceable to God, as a Man may be to his Friend* ; and as God is to us. All acceptable Gifts, suppose the Indigency and Want of the Person to whom they are given. Whereas God stands in no Need of our Gifts ; nor can we offer to him any Thing that he wants, or that can be of the least Benefit to him.

Nay,



Nay, we have nothing but what we have received from him; what he lends to us for our Use, and has a Right to resume when he pleases. This one Thought detects the Vanity and Superstition of all those *Sacrifices* and *Gifts* that were offered, both by Jews and Heathens, under a Notion of pleasing God, by compensating for the Benefits they had received, or commuting with him for the Sins they had committed. The *Principle* these Free-will Offerings flowed from, was often *good*, but this Manner of expressing their Gratitude, was always *empty* and *vain*. In such Cases, as St. Paul bears them Witness, the Jews *had a Zeal for God, but not according to Knowledge*. This, as *Asaph* observes, proceeded from their *thinking God was, in this Respect, such an one as themselves*; an indigent Being, that partook with them of their Gifts and Sacrifices, and was hereby pacified and pleased: And accordingly introduces God as testifying against such Offerings, *I will take no Bullock out of thy House, nor He-Goats out of thy Folds. For every Beast of the Forest is mine, and the Cattle upon a thousand Hills. I know all the Fowls of the Mountains: And the wild Beasts of the Field*

Psalm 13.  
9—13.

are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the World is mine, and the Fulness thereof. Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? And hence, says David in the next Psalm, Ver. 16. *Thou desirest not Sacrifice, else would I give it.* “I  
 “ would grudge no Cost or Charge, if here-  
 “ by I could benefit or please God.” But the Perfection of God’s Nature, sets him infinitely above all such Wants, and makes the Thought unworthy of him. With this one unanswerable Argument, Paul silenced the Philosophers at Athens, and exposed the Vanity of all Idolatry and Ritual Sacrifices, declaring to them, the TRUE, but UNKNOWN GOD, whom they ignorantly worshipped. God that made the World, and all Things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, as though he NEEDED ANY THING; seeing he giveth to ALL, Life, and Breath, and all Things.

THE Question therefore still remains, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* I answer again in the Negative, We have Nothing to offer that God stands in Need of, or that can be profitable to him:

him : Nor should we ever entertain the least Thought of any such Worth or Merit in our best and most reasonable Service. For what, *Can a Man be profitable to God, as he that is wise, may be profitable to himself? Is it profit to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it Gain to him, that thou makest thy Way perfect? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? — Or if thou sinnest, what doest thou to him?* Our Saviour teaches us the same Lesson, *When ye shall have done all those Things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants; we have done that which was our Duty to do.* From which last Words, you will do well to observe, That our Saviour here, whilst labouring to suppress a very wrong Spirit and pernicious Notion, is not at all weakening our Obligations to God, but the contrary. Do, says he, *All those Things that God has commanded you; and do them, because they are your reasonable and indispensable Duty : But then, do not think that you have repaid God for his Benefits, and discharged your Obligations for the future; but say, We have done that which was our Duty to do, and will continue to do*

Job xxii.  
2, 3.

Job xxxv.  
6, 7.

Luke xvii.  
10.

so. What that is, comes now to be considered.

Now, here let it be observed in *General*; That every Benefit freely received, leaves a double Obligation — One in Point of *Justice* — the Other of *Gratitude*. In natural *Justice* we are bound to return *like for like*, or some Equivalent Benefit, if in our Power, and our Benefactor needs it, or is willing to accept it. If *freely ye have received, freely give*. But if the generous Kindness of our Benefactor, exempts us from such equivalent Returns; or if our Indigency, or his Fulness, make this impossible, (as is the Case betwixt God and his Creatures) yet our Obligations in Point of *Gratitude*, are not relaxed, but much strengthened and increased. Only here is the Difficulty, to know *what* to return, when we can make none that our Benefactor stands in Need of. But let us not think we are hereby exempt from all Obligation to pious *Gratitude*. This ought *first* to take Place in the *Heart*, and from thence proceed in all the Expressions of Gratitude, that Nature dictates, and the Will of our Benefactor requires; provided his Will exceeds not the Merit of his Benefits. Now, as our ALL  
proceeds

proceeds from God, he can ask Nothing in our Power beyond his due. Upon Enquiry, we shall easily discover, what *Gratitude* to God requires and obliges us to, *viz.* Things *natural, fit, and good*, antecedent to all Consideration of *Advantage*, either to God or to Ourselves.

AND should I find a Person, who thought himself under no Obligations to pious *Gratitude*, because he cannot hereby be *serviceable to God*; I should not wonder, if such a Person thought himself under no Religious Restraints from *Vice* and *Sin*; because these Things cannot *hurt God*. He that can see no natural *Beauty* in the *One*, I should not wonder, if he can see no *Deformity* in the *Other*. But as I said before, our Obligations to *Gratitude* are increased, in Proportion as our Benefactor expects no beneficial Returns to himself; and become due, *prior* to all Consideration of *Benefit*, either to God, or to Ourselves.

WHAT then *shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits*? What is my *Duty*; and What my *reasonable Service*? For though *I cannot be profitable to God*, it does not follow that I am under no Obligations — far from

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XI.

Luke xii.  
48.

it. Every Benefit in the Nature of Things, leaves behind it an Obligation; for *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: Even as to whom Men have committed much, of him will they ask the more.*

Now, in discovering, *What it is that the Lord our God requires of us, in Return for all his Benefits*, the Psalm before us will afford good Directions. And though he seems at a Loss, yet the Conduct of the Psalmist, will be an instructive Precedent. For as the *Question* is put in my *Text*, so shall we find the *Answer* to it in this *Psalm*. To Instance in particulars,

I.) IN *Return for all God's Benefits*, we should *love God*; should cherish in our Souls the best Sentiments of God, and the best Affections towards him; regarding him for the future, as our All-sufficient and best Friend, to whom we are indebted for the Original Gift, and for the constant Preservation of our Life and Being. Yea, we should consider him as the Being from whom *every good and every perfect Gift descends*, who is able and willing to do for us *exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*. Thus the Psalmist begins, *I will love the*  
Lord



*Lord because he hath heard my Voice and my Supplication.* We have all Reason for this, from our own Experience, as well as the Psalmist had. *For God is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.*

Who can his Love express !  
His Mercy ne'er decays :  
What can my Soul do less,  
Than love him all my Days ?  
Bless God my Soul,  
Ev'n unto Death ;  
And offer Praise  
With ev'ry Breath.

2.) IN *Return for former Benefits*, We should take Encouragement *to hope in God* ; and in the Exercise of lively *Hope* and steadfast *Faith*, should offer up our Prayers and Supplications to him, for his *Grace to help in every future Time of Need*. Thus the Psalmist goes on, Ver. 1, 2. *I love the Lord because he hath heard my Voice and my Supplication* (in the Original, it is, because *he will bear my Voice and my Supplication*) He has done so *before*, and from hence I take Encouragement to hope, he will

do so again. I have found him both able and willing — *My Refuge and my Strength, a very present Help in Trouble.* And because he has inclined his Ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

IT is for Our Benefit, not his Own, that God has enjoined upon us this Duty of Prayer. And when we perform it from this Principle of Love and Obedience, we glorify God, and behave towards him as what he is. O thou that hearest Prayer, unto thee shall all Flesh come. As for God, his Eyes are always over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Cry. He never said to any of the Seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. He bids us not to be anxious in any Circumstances, but in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God. He bids us to cast all our Cares upon him, for he careth for us. The Experience we have had of this, in Conjunction with his Promises, is the Ground and Reason of our Prayers, as well as our Praises. And such is the free Grace of God, that one of the most acceptable Returns we can make to him for past Benefits, is to trust in him for the future — to draw nigh to him with  
 holy

Psal. lxy.

29

Phil. iv.

6.

holy Reverence and Confidence, as *Children to a Father*, believing that he is both able and willing to do for us *exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*. This is to pray to him, as *God*: And to pray to him, as *his indigent helpless Creatures*.—Not as One that wants, or waits for any *Benefits* from us; but as One that always waits to be gracious, and delights in doing good to us. And for any Being to *restrain Prayer before God*, argues a Disbelief, or Disregard of God; together with a Mind void of all Sense of *Duty* and *Gratitude*.

3.) A *FIRM Reliance* upon God, and a chearful *Resignation* to his Will and Disposal, is a farther Return due to him, *for all his Benefits*. When our Minds are overpowered with a grateful Sense of all the great and good Things, that God has done for us, what can we do less than wholly resign to him, and rely upon him for the Future. Thus the Psalmist, Ver. 7. *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*. Reliance upon God, and Resignation to his Will, is the only *Rest* for the Mind and Soul of Man.  
“ O my Soul, what Experience, what large  
“ and

“ and long Experience have I had of the  
 “ Care and Faithfulness of my God. — And  
 “ though I am in this Vale of Tears, and  
 “ Valley of Death, my God is with me,  
 “ and I need fear no Evil. Return there-  
 “ fore unto thy *Rest*, O my Soul.” This is  
 a most reasonable *Return* for all the Good-  
 ness of God, and though it is no Ways ser-  
 viceable to him, yet it is more acceptable,  
 than all the most costly Burnt-Offerings and  
 Sacrifices.

4.) DEVOUT Praise and Thanksgiving,  
 both Publick and Private, is a farther *Re-  
 turn* due to God. Not that God delights  
 in the vain Applauses of his Creatures: A  
 Thought so mean and unworthy, should  
 never enter our Hearts. But the Duty is  
 both *reasonable* and *Natural*: And from  
 what is so Reasonable, God himself cannot  
 exempt us. And for him to stifle these  
 Natural Workings of a grateful Soul, by  
 forbidding us to disburden the Gratitude of  
 our Hearts by the Joy and Praise of our Lips,  
 would be a most cruel and unnatural Prohi-  
 bition. But still, it is *Our* Benefit, not *His*,  
 that is hereby promoted: And whilst we  
 spread the Glory of his Goodness in the Con-  
 gregations

gregations of his People, we contribute to the Good and Happiness of the World.

GRATITUDE is a Debt naturally due for Benefits received. It is in Effect, the *only Return* we can make to God, or he receive from us. Every Act of generous Kindness, leaves a double Obligation — One of Justice — another of Gratitude. — Of Justice, to return like for like, or something equivalent, if in our Power ; and the proper and devout Expressions of it are naturally fit, and decent in themselves, as well as pleasant and delightful to our own Souls. Here the Psalmist founds this *Duty, Praise ye the Lord ; for it is GOOD to sing Praises unto our God — for it is PLEASANT — and Praise is COMELY.* Says Mr. Grove, “ While I meditate the Mercies of God, and thankfully acknowledge them, methinks the Day-spring from on high, visits my benighted Soul. I no longer sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death. My Confidence, that the tender Mercies of God, will not utterly abandon me, increases ; and by Degrees, my Tears dry up, and Sorrow and Sighing flee away.” Things of positive Appointment are superseded by the Gospel

Psalm  
cxlviii.  
begin.

Gospel of Christ; and all costly ritual Sacrifices are done away. But this *Natural Sacrifice* of Praise and Gratitude must for ever remain; which both *Poor* and *Rich*, are equally capable of offering up to God. Accordingly it is enjoined by the *Author* to the *Hebrews*, in that *Epistle*, intended to put an End to the Practice of all *Ritual Sacrifices*, by *Christ* therefore, under this new and better Covenant, *let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, that is the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name.* Thus the Psalmist in this Composure before us, as well as in other Places, too many to be mentioned, asks, *What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his Benefits?* He answers, Ver. 17. *I will offer the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord. I will pay my Vows unto the Lord, now in the Presence of all his People, in the Courts of the Lord's House, in the Midst of thee, O Jerusalem — Praise ye the Lord.*

5.) Is it still asked, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* The Psalmist answers, *Myself. My Whole-self. My Soul and Body — my Heart and my Life.* “Has God made me? Does he constantly  
“ preserve



“ preserve me? Has he redeemed my Life  
“ from Destruction, and crowned me with Lov-  
“ ing-Kindness and tender Mercy? I will de-  
“ vote to him myself; my whole-self; de-  
“ termined to submit intirely to his Will,  
“ and resign to his Disposal — I will choose  
“ him for my God, my Guide, and my Por-  
“ tion — and that for Ever — I will yield  
“ up myself to him, as one that is alive from  
“ the Dead — I will ratify this Dedication  
“ of myself — by embracing every return-  
“ ing Opportunity of recognizing this solemn  
“ Dedication, *taking the Christian Cup of Sal-*  
“ *vation, and calling upon the Name of the*  
“ *Lord.*” This one Sacrifice and Dedicati-  
on of ourselves, is *more than all Burnt-Offer-*  
*ings and Sacrifices.* I beseech you therefore,  
*Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye pre-*  
*sent your Bodies* (not your Cattle or Substance)  
but yourselves a living Sacrifice (not the dead  
Body of a Beast) but your own *Bodies, a liv-*  
*ing Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which*  
*is your reasonable Service.* And be not con-  
formed to this World, but be ye transformed by  
the renewing of your Minds — that ye may  
prove, what is that good, and acceptable, and  
perfect Will of God. Thus in the Psalm be-  
fore

Rom. xii.  
1, 2.

fore us, I love the Lord, because he hath heard my Voice and my Supplications; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The Sorrows of Death compassed me, and the Pains of Hell gat hold upon me: I found Trouble and Sorrow. Then called I upon the Name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my Soul. He delivered my Soul from Death, mine Eyes from Tears, and my Feet from falling. Now, What shall I render for all his Benefits. It follows, I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord. I will pay my Vows unto the Lord, now in the Presence of all his People. O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, yea, I am thy Servant, thou hast loosed my Bonds.

How happy all thy Servants are,  
How great thy Grace to me!  
My Life, which thou hast made thy Care,  
Lord, I devote to thee.

Now I am thine, for ever thine,  
Nor shall my Purpose move;  
Thy Hand has loos'd my Bonds of Pain,  
And bound me with thy Love.

Here

*for all his Benefits.*

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XI.

Here in thy Courts I leave my Vow,  
And thy rich Grace record,  
Witness ye Saints, who hear me now,  
If I forsake the Lord.

THIS leads to the *last* Thing, I have yet to mention.

6.) THE *sincere, constant, and persevering Obedience of our Lives*, compleats the *Return* which God expects and requires for all his Benefits. Ver. 16. *O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant* — I will serve thee as long as I live. My Friends, *Obedience is better than Sacrifice*. Yea, Praise to God, without Righteousness and Good-Will to Men, will not be accepted; together with the several Virtues of a *sober, righteous, and good Life*. Accordingly in that forecited Place, *Heb. xiii. 15.* having enjoined, *Let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, that is the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name*: It follows, *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such Sacrifices, God is well pleased*. To do good, and to communicate, forget not — live in the Practice of all Good; and particularly let

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let the Benefits you receive so *freely* and *graciously* from God, inspire you with the same Kind and compassionate Disposition towards the Objects of your Mercy. *Freely you have received, freely give ; that you may be the Children of your Heavenly Father.*

IF any of you still ask, *But what farther shall I render unto the Lord for all his Mercies ?* I answer, I know not. All that God either expects or requires from you, I think, is comprehended in these *Six Particulars* mentioned. And if these Returns are suitably made, your Persons and your Offerings, will be accepted.

A GRATEFUL Heart would be glad to know, what *farther Returns* can be made to God ; being willing to do, or submit to any Thing : But for my Part, I can conceive of nothing more, that God either requires, or will accept. Superstition indeed, has invented many, far more showy and expensive ; but then they are all empty and vain, *beggarly Elements*, grounded upon false and unworthy Apprehensions of God. See *Mich. vi. 6, 7, 8.* and *Psalms 50.* Such are all the Vows, Gifts, and Deodands, that disgrace  
the

the Heathen and Popish Temples. See *Acts* xvii. 24, 25.

I HAVE thus returned the plainest and best Answer in my Power, to the *Question* before us. What now remains, is to inforce the Observance of these *Six* Directions. I have but little Time left for this Purpose: And if I had more, I should still be at a Loss, what particular Arguments to pitch upon. Arguments and Motives in Abundance, arise and offer themselves: But no Arguments of mine, can add to the Force of this one Motive, which God himself sets before each of your Minds; even those *Personal Benefits*, which each of you have received, and are daily receiving from God. And, if what I have said has not put you upon calling to Mind the *Benefits of God towards you*, it is in vain for me to add any Enforcements. And if the Remembrance of God's Benefits do not affect your Hearts, nothing that I can say, will do it. If any of you *despise God's Benefits*, and your *own Mercies*, you will *despise my Words*. If you can resist God, you will certainly resist Man. *But I hope better Things of you, though I thus*  
S *Speak.*

*Speak.* I trust, that the *Love of God* is already shed abroad in your Hearts, whereunto you are called; and that you are devoutly thankful to God, and disposed to hearken to a Repetition of the *Six Returns*, that you should make to him *for all his Benefits* — to treasure them up in your Hearts, and reduce them into Practice in your Lives.

Do you ask, “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?*” (1.) You should *love God with all your Hearts, with all your Souls, and with all your Strength.* (2.) Take Encouragement from former Mercies, to hope in God for the future; and in the Exercise of this Hope, pray to him for Grace to help in every Time of Need. (3.) Rely upon God, and yield a chearful Resignation to his whole Will, and to all his Disposals. (4.) Glorify God, by offering up your sincere Praise, and cordial Thanks, for all his Benefits. (5.) *Present yourselves, your whole selves, a living Sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable Service.* (6.) LASTLY, render to him the sincere, constant, and persevering Obedience of your Lives. And *when you have done all,*  
*say,*



*for all his Benefits.*

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*Say, we are unprofitable Servants ; we have done Nothing, but what it was our Duty, and our own Interest and Advantage, to do. However, if you do all This, such is the disinterested Goodness, and free, rich, Grace of God, that he bids you welcome to all his Benefits. Since you know these Things, happy are ye, if ye do them.*





# S E R M O N   X I I .


The FEAR of DEATH CONQUER-  
ABLE.



PSALM xxiii. 4.

*Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the  
Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil:  
For thou art with me — thy Rod and thy  
Staff they comfort me.*

SERMON  
XII.

 HIS Scripture-Passage leads our  
Thoughts to the most serious and  
interesting Subject, and sets it  
before us in the most agreeable  
and amiable Point of Light. The Subject  
of our present Meditations is *Death*; an E-  
vent that awaits us all, at no great Distance.  
*The living know that they must die*; that it is  
*appointed to ALL Men once to die*. Though  
this is what WE never did, or experienced,  
yet

yet we know it is what we must submit to e'er long. An Event this, in its Nature the most serious and awful; and in its Consequences, the most important. The *Art of Dying*, if I may so call it, the Art of Dying safely, comfortably, and happily, is not to be learned at once; nor like other Arts, by repeated Experiments; since we must die but *once*. It follows upon this, that it is our great Wisdom and Duty, to be prepared for this awful Event, by direct and previous Meditations. It is therefore purposely with a View to assist you in this grand Affair, that I have made Choice of this Subject; where the Psalmist says, *Yea, though I walk, or am now walking, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil.*

WHAT is meant by *Death*, needs no Explanation; but what is meant by *the Valley of the Shadow*, or by this *shady Valley*, of Death, requires some Thought. Death itself is instantaneous — an Article in which we are purely *passive*; but in *WALKING through this Valley of the Shadow of Death*, we are *active*; and the Journey itself we shall find of some considerable Length. Perhaps you imagine, that you shall only enter

this Valley, when you come to die; and that it lies on the other Side Death. If so, your Imagination deceives you. This *Valley of Death*, and your Journey through it, *ends*, where you were fancying it *begun*. All beyond Death, is the boundless Plain of Eternity, where *Mortality is swallowed up of Life*.

THIS *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, mentioned in my Text, we shall find on this Side Death and the Grave. We enter upon it the Moment we are born, and we get out of it the Moment we die. It is this *Mortal Life* itself, which we spend here upon Earth — It has been the Valley of the Shadow of Death ever since that Day, *when Sin first entered into the World, and Death by Sin*. The Penalty threatened against Sin, is in our Translation, *In that Day thou shalt surely die*. But in the *Hebrew*, according to the Reading in the Margin, it is, *dying thou shalt die*. This has literally been the Case with Mankind ever since, and is so still. A more proper Description cannot be given of this Life and World, than this; It is the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*. Death unseen, is constantly besetting us on every Side,  
like

Rom. v.  
12.

Gen. ii.  
17.

like *the Pestilence that walketh in Darkneſs, and the Deſtruction that waſteth at Noon-Day.* In this Life we have not one Moment, and in this World we have not one Place of Refuge, exempt from Death; whilſt Inſtances of Mortality ſurround us on every Side; all telling us, that *in the Miſt of Life we are in Death.* Surely every Man *walketh in a vain Shew.* Man is like to *Vanity*; his Days are as a Shadow, that paſſeth away. *All the Days of his vain Life he ſpendeth as a Shadow.* Whilſt Man walks here upon Earth, he is conſtantly walking through *the Valley of the Shadow of Death.*

Pſalm  
xxxix. 6.  
Pſalm  
cxliv. 4.

Eccleſ. vi.  
12.

WE need only to read and conſider this Pſalm to be convinced, that this is the very Thing *David* intended by this Phraſe. He was not Dead, nor Dying; nor was he Sick or Weak, or Aged and Infirm, as appears plainly from the Contents; but ſtill *he was then walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*; in the Vigour of Life; with an healthful Body, and a chearful, though ſerious, and pious Mind — chearing himſelf, and rejoicing in God, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I ſhall not want.* He maketh me to lie down in green Paſtures: He leadeth me be-

Pſal. xxiii.  
1, 2, 3.

*side the still Waters — He restoreth my Soul — He leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousness for his Names-Sake. It follows, Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me — thy Rod and thy Staff, they comfort me. He goes on, Thou preparest a Table before me in the Presence of mine Enemies. — Thou anointest my Head with Oil, my Cup runneth over, surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the Days of my Life; and I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever. In the midst of these pleasing Sentiments, and in this chearful Temper, and happy State, the Psalmist freely indulges to the Thoughts of Death, and beholds himself in the Region of the Shadow of Death.*

How many Subjects of Meditation, and how many Lessons of useful Instruction, does this Passage suggest to our Thoughts, when considered in its proper Connection?

FIRST, It teacheth us, that it becomes every wise and good Man, to consider himself as constantly *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death* — to meditate his Mortality — frequently to look forward to his last and great Change by Death; and to  
do



do this when in Circumstances of Health and Prosperity. Here the Psalmist is our Precedent.

SECONDLY, These Considerations, together with the most direct and serious Thoughts of Death, do not at all unfit a pure and pious Mind for relishing the true Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life. The Psalmist never appeared better pleased with his Condition, more delighted with his Lot, nor more thankful for it, than in this *Psalm*, where his Thoughts at the same Time, are turned upon his *Mortality*. And no Wonder; for a Man can never enjoy *Life*, till he has surmounted the *Dread of Death*. THEN he begins to *live*, but not before. Till this, *through Fear of Death, he is all his Life-Time subject to Bondage.*

THIRDLY, A pious and good Man does not look upon his Safety and Happiness as confined to this Life, and the Things of it; nor does he look upon Death with the ghastly Apprehension of *the Men of this World, whose Portion is in this Life*; but, whilst *passing through this Valley of the Shadow of Death, he fears no Evil.*

FOURTHLY,

FOURTHLY, The same God, who sustains and comforts his Servants in this *Life*, will sustain and comfort them in *Death*. This was the Psalmist's Encouragement, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want — Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the Days of my Life — Yea, though I walk thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil.*

FIFTHLY, We may farther learn, that if whilst we are passing through this State of Mortality, and when we come to die, we would fear no Evil, we must provide and prepare our Minds in the Time of Health and Prosperity. Thus acted the *Psalmist*, as this Composure discovers; when easy and happy, like the Flocks that lie down in green Pastures, and feed beside the still Waters — When free from all Want and Sorrow, and rejoicing in the Strength and Vigour of Life, he had so considered his Mortality, and so acquainted himself with the *Shady Valley*, that the Dangers, the Bitterness, and the Terrors of Death were past, before it came. Though he had not experienced Death itself, yet he had so long lived in View and Expectation of it, and so far prepared

prepared and reconciled his Mind to it, that he says with a sacred Boldness and Confidence in God, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil.*

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SIXTHLY, We may here learn, What is the *Support* of such a pious Mind, under the Views and Prospects of Death; and that is, GOD Himself. *I will fear no Evil, for THOU art with me, thy Rod, and thy Staff, they comfort me.* Or as *Asaph, I am continually with thee; thou hast bolden me by thy Right-Hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth, that I desire besides thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but GOD is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.*

Psalms  
lxxiii.  
23—26.

EACH of these well deserve particular Consideration; but my Time will not allow me to enter upon them; what therefore I propose, is this,

- I. To shew, That the dreadful Fears and Apprehensions of Death are capable of being conquered and overcome. And,
- II. How this is to be accomplished.

I. I SHALL

I. I SHALL undertake to shew, That the dreadful Fears and Apprehensions of Death are capable of being conquered and overcome. Death itself cannot be avoided; but the slavish *Fear* of it may be suppressed, and our Minds reconciled to the Thoughts of it. Now as we all know that we must die, and are liable to Death every Moment, sure we cannot but desire to live the Life, *and die the Death of the Righteous, and have our latter End like his.* The Psalmist appears to have attained to this desirable Frame and Fortitude of Mind. And let us not think, that his was a singular Case. It ought to be the Case with every Man living, and much more with every Christian. It is our *Duty*, because it is our *Happiness*. We meet with many like Instances upon Record, both in the Old Testament, and in the Writings of the Heathens, which I could easily produce. For the *Mortality of Man*, is not an Article of *Revelation*; and every Wise Man will choose to be provided for what he knows is unavoidably coming upon him. Now, if *Jews* and *Heathens* could attain to this Satisfaction and Calmness of Mind, how much more may sincere and good *Christians*; if they

they would improve their Privileges, and not by *Negligence*, or a false *Humility*, count themselves unworthy of this most desirable Happiness.

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THE great End of our Saviour's *Life* and *Preaching*, was to teach us our *Duty*; but one of the great Ends of his *Death*, was to make Way for his *Resurrection*, whereby he has abolished *Death*, and brought *Life* and *Immortality to Light*. He took not on him the *Nature of Angels*, or *Messengers*, who delivered their *Message*, and then disappeared, without dying and rising again; but he had an *Human, Mortal Body* prepared him, that by *Death*, followed by his *Resurrection*, he might destroy the *Power and Terror of Death*; and deliver them, who through *Fear of Death* were all their *Life-Time* subject to *Bondage*. Hence the Apostle introduces *Mortal Man*, destitute of our *Christian Advantages*, as crying out in *Distress*, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Death* — or from this *Mortal Body*! He immediately comforts himself, and shews us how to comfort ourselves, *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory by our Lord Jesus Christ*. And in the Close of the next Chapter, he

2 Tim. i.  
10.

Heb. ii.  
14, 15, 16.

Rom. vii.  
24, 25.

sums

sums up his Argument thus, *For I am persuaded, that neither Life, nor Death — neither Things present, nor Things to come, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord.* In 1 Cor. 15, 26. it is said in our Translation, *The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death*; but in the Original it is, *The last Enemy, Death, is destroyed*; \* *Now Christ is risen from the Dead, and become the first Fruits of them that slept.* Upon this the Chapter concludes in Triumph, *O Death, Where is thy Sting? O Grave, Where is thy Victory? — Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

KNOW my Brethren, We are the privileged Disciples of the Son of God, who lived, and died, and rose again, that he might *abolish Death, bring Life and Immortality to Light, deliver us from the Fear of Death,* and inspire us with new and living Hope.

Our

\* Εσχάτος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος. Καταργεῖν Never signifieth to *destroy*, so as to put an End to the Being, or Existence of the Thing itself; but to deprive it of its natural and usual Power, or its intended and proper Effects: Then the Thing is *αργός*, vain, and ineffectual. — When naturally *good*, it becomes *useless*: When naturally *terrible*, it ceaseth to be so.



Our Fears suspected that this Life had terminated in Death ; but our Risen Saviour, has shewed us, that it terminates in Immortal Life ; and has consecrated for us into the Holiest, even into Heaven itself, a *new and living Way*, through this Vail of Flesh. He himself met Death, *as such*, without Terror, and without Amazement. Perhaps you have been led to think the contrary. But let me say, such Apprehensions are not only groundless and unreasonable, but they are highly injurious to our Saviour's Character, and prejudicial to that Strength and Comfort of Soul, which would otherwise arise in us, and is intended to arise from the Consideration of the Frame of Mind, with which the Captain of our Salvation met, and conquered Death. We read indeed, of his *Agony*, and of his repeated Prayer, that, *if possible, the bitter Cup might pass from him*. But was Death itself this *bitter Cup*? Or did he thus desire to *live*, or fear to *die*? No, sure. He had met with Nothing in this World, to make him so desirous to stay in it, after he had *finished the Work, which God gave him to do* ; and sure his pure, pious, and divine Mind, had Nothing to fear, but every Thing

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to hope for, after Death. It was the *Manner* of his Death, not *Death* itself; the lingring and agonizing Tortures of Crucifixion, that were the *bitter Cup* he deprecated; the very Thoughts of which at this Day, are enough to strike us with Trembling and Horror. Had he been unmoved and unaffected at this Thought, he had not been MAN; nor could he from *Experience* have had Compassion on his Disciples under the Pains which some of them indure, both in *Life* and at *Death*. But now we are directed to *look unto Jesus, the Author and Perfeeter of our Faith, who for the Joy set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame; and consider him, who endured such Contradietion of Sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our Minds.* To see whether this be a just Account or not, which I have now given, read and weigh every Expression, which proceeded from our dear Saviour's Lips, from the Time when he first predicted his Death, to the Time of his Departure, and you will find, he never speaks to his Disciples of Death itself, with the least seeming Terror, nor with any Emotion, but that of Pleasure and Joy. He

went

Heb. xii.  
2, 3.

went up to *Jerusalem* to attend the Passover, knowing the Things that should befall him there : And when he found the deadly Spirit was gone forth, his first Words are these, *The Hour is come, that the Son of Man must be GLORIFIED.* Not the *Hour* that the Son of Man must *die*, but the *Hour* that the Son of Man must be *glorified*. Instead of being discouraged, he goes on to encourage his Attendants, and inspire them with a Fearlessness of Death, *He that loveth his Life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his Life in this World, shall keep it unto Life Eternal. If any Man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my Servant be : If any Man serve me, him will my Father honour.* Are these the Words of one that is afraid of Death, or in love with a Life in this World? Let the next Expression then be understood and explained, consistent with what precedeth it. *Now is my Soul troubled ; now is a trying Time indeed, and What shall I say ? Shall I say, Father save me from this Hour ? No — for this Cause came I to this Hour.* But this I say, *Father glorify thy Name.* Read on, through Chapters xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, and xvii. where you will find him keeping the Passover ; instituting the Memorial of his

own Death ; conversing with his Disciples ; praying to God for them, to keep them, and comfort them, after his Death ; and all this with a Spirit perfectly composed, serious, and pious. — And in the Beginning of the xviith Chapter, praying for himself with all Trust and Confidence in God, *These Words spake Jesus, and lift up his Eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the Hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee.* Ver. 4. *I have glorified thee on the Earth. I have finished the Work, which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own Self, with the Glory which I had with thee, before the World was.* Had I Time to consider the whole Conduct of our Saviour through Life, to the last Moment, when he said, *Father into thy Hands I commend my Spirit* — bowed the Head, and gave up the Ghost, though we shall find him *sensible of Pain*, yet we shall always find him *fearless of Death*.

LET us now go on and consider the Spirit of his Disciples, in this Respect. Before the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, whilst they thought of Nothing, but his Kingdom here upon Earth, they were timorous and weak

weak like other Men; and *through Fear of Death, they all forsook him and fled*: But after his Resurrection, they received the promised Spirit, *the Comforter*; and from this Time forward, we find them *fearless of Death*. Whilst passing through this Valley of the Shadow of Death, the Apostle Paul speaks for himself, and for the rest of his Brethren, and let his Account suffice, 2 Cor. iv. 8. to Chap. v. 9. *We are troubled on every Side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in Despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed — always bearing about in the Body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our Body. — Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you — For which Cause we faint not, but though the outward Man, the Body, perish, yet the inward Man, the Mind and Soul, is renewed Day by Day. — While we look, not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things, which are not seen; for seen Things are temporal, but Things not seen are eternal. For we know, that if our Earthly House of this Tabernacle be dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not*



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*made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens. —*

*For we that are in this Tabernacle, do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that Mortality might be swallowed up of Life. Now he that hath wrought us for this self same Thing, is GOD; who also hath given unto us the Earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, and willing (we are bold and well-pleased) \* rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him. Permit me to add two Passages more, concerning our Apostle. He tells the Christians of Ephesus, when taking his last Farewel, And now behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the Things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me: But none of these Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy. And he tells Timothy towards the Close of his second, and probably his last Letter to him, I am now ready to be offered, (as a Sacrifice upon the Service of your Faith) † and the Time*

Acts xx.  
22, 23, 24.

2 Tim. iv.  
6, 7, 8.

\* θαρροῦμεν καὶ, εὐδοκοῦμεν.

† σπένδομαι.



*Time of my Departure is at hand — I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them, that love his appearing.*

THIS, my Brethren, is the fearless, joyful, heavenly Frame of Spirit, that the Gospel of Jesus is intended to promote in every Christian. It is calculated for this high, this happy, and most desirable Purpose; and is abundantly sufficient to answer this great and most exalted End — and will do it, if cordially embraced, and faithfully improved. Multitudes of Christians, I doubt not, in every Age, have reached this noble Fortitude and Elevation of Soul; and the same Spirit awaits us All. It is not the Intention of Jesus, that his Disciples and Followers should shrink back, and shudder at the Thoughts of Death, but live, *looking for the blessed Hope, that is set before them.* He submitted to the most cruel and torturing Death, purposely *to deliver us from this Fear of Death.* And if this is not sufficient, What is it that you would have? Shall Jesus live, and preach,

and die in vain? O ye professed Christians, *Our Mouth is open unto you, our Heart is enlarged — ye are not straitened in us, nor in your God — I speak as unto my Children, be ye also enlarged. Say to your timorous Heart, Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Trust in God, for thou shalt yet praise him; Yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me — thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.*

WHAT I proposed in this Discourse was, to shew, *That the dreadful Fears and Apprehensions of Death, are capable of being conquered and overcome.* This, I hope, I have evinced sufficiently; yea, have proved more than I proposed, even that the *Fear of Death* may, and ought to be converted into *lively Hope, and Heavenly Joy — Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.*

AND sure I need not say *One Word* to prove, that this is a most *desirable Attainment.* In some Manner, and with some Frame of Spirit, we must all *walk through this Valley of the Shadow of Death:* And it cannot be a Thing indifferent, whether we walk through calm and serene, with a cheerful

ful and stedfast Heart ; or live under gloomy and dreadful Apprehensions ; and are at last dragged to meet Death as the *King of Terrors*. The Difference is so great, that no one can deliberate a Moment, which is preferable. And one would think no Motives need to be urged, in order to awaken your Attention to such Directions, as I am prepared to lay before you. But my Time at present will not allow me to enter upon them. I conclude, as *Paul* concludes his Dissertation on the same Subject. *O Death, where is thy Sting ? O Grave, where is thy Victory ? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

1 Cor. xv.  
55—58.

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**M**Y Shepherd is the living Lord ;  
Now shall my Wants be well supply'd ;  
His Providence and holy Word  
Become my Safety and my Guide.

In Pastures where Salvation grows  
He makes me feed, he makes me rest,  
There living Water gently flows,  
And all the Food divinely blest.

Tho' I walk thro' the gloomy Vale,  
Where Death and all its Terrors are,  
My Heart and Hope shall never fail ;  
For God my Shepherd's with me there.

Amidst the Darkneſs and the Deep,  
Thou art my Comfort, thou my Stay ;  
Thy Staff ſupports my feeble Steps,  
Thy Rod directs my doubtful Way.

Surely the Mercies of the Lord,  
Attend his Houſhold all their Days ;  
There will I dwell to hear thy Word,  
To ſeek thy Face, and ſing thy Praise.



# S E R M O N XIII.

How to conquer the FEAR of  
DEATH.



PSALM xxiii. 4.

*Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the  
Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil:  
For thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff  
they comfort me.*

IN a former Discourse upon this  
I Subject, I undertook to shew,

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- I. THAT the dreadful Fears  
and Apprehensions of Death, are ca-  
pable of being conquered and over-  
come. I now proceed,
- II. To consider, How this is to be ac-  
complished.

He,

HE, *that striveth for this Mastery, will not be crowned, unless he strive lawfully.* Not only guilty Sinners, but frequently sincere Penitents, and truly virtuous, and pious Persons, *through Fear of Death are all their Life-Time subject to Bondage*; and this, notwithstanding all that Christ has done and suffered, to deliver them from this unhappy State. They are in this Respect, like *Children* that tremble in the Dark, and fear where no Fear is. If therefore I can direct you to such Methods as will help to remove this vain and enslaving Dread, and to strengthen your Faith and Hope in God, I shall contribute more to the Comfort and Happiness of your Lives, than any Increase of sensual Pleasures, or of worldly Substance.

LET me previously observe, that I am not attempting to direct Wicked and Impious Sinners, how to conquer or evade the Fears of Death: This would be to undertake an Impossibility. It would be as easy to teach them, how to avoid Death itself; for *the Sting, or Spear of Death, is Sin*. If there had been no Sin, there might have been a *Translation*, but there had been no *Death*. And now, there is Nothing *terrible* in Death,  
nothing



nothing that needs to be esteemed terrible, but what arises from *Sin*. Bodily Pains and Afflictions, I grant, *are not joyous, but grievous, and sometimes terrible*; but, take Notice, *these* are not *Death*, nor peculiar Attendants upon it, but upon this *Life*. When *Death* comes, *bodily Pain* is over. And if the present *Life* be continued for a Number of Years, we have Reason to expect and fear far more *bodily Pain*, than if we should die this Moment. But it is not these *bodily, sensitive Pains*, but the *Fears and Terrors of the Mind*, arising from the *Thought and Prospect of Death*, that is now under Consideration; which the pure and pious Mind may, and ought to conquer and overcome.

As for the *Wicked*, he has neither *Lot nor Portion in this Matter*, unless he repent and reform; become dead to *Sin*, and alive unto God. For him to put from him the Thoughts of *Death* is *Stupidity*; and to think of diverting its Terrors by Pleasure and Amusement, or to drown them in Sottishness and Debauchery, is only to encrease them. To attempt to sooth such guilty Souls with the Consolations of Piety and Religion, is only to make them Hypocrites, and deceive

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deceive their Souls. Whilst these impenitent Sinners fancy they are, treasuring up Strength and Comfort, and hardening themselves against the Fear of Death, they are only *treasuring up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* Imaginary, spiritual Strength and Courage, with a guilty Conscience, is the Essence of *Hypocrisy.* Knowest thou not this of old, since Man was placed upon Earth; That the *Triumphing of the Wicked is short, and the Joy of the Hypocrite but for a Moment? For, What is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul? The Hypocrites Hope shall perish — it shall be cut off, and his Trust shall be a Spider's Web.*

Job xx.  
4, 5.

Job xxvii.  
8.

Job viii.  
13, 14.

I SHALL therefore at present leave the Hypocrite and Sinner to the *Terrors of the Lord*, as the Provision made to awaken them to Repentance; and proceed in my Endeavours to administer Strength and Comfort to truly pious and well-disposed Minds. To you, and you only, I now address myself, who are sincerely desirous to approve yourselves to God, *by a persevering Continuance in well-doing*; but at present live under discouraging

ing Fears and Apprehensions of Death ; or at least are apprehensive this will be the Case, when the Time comes that you must die ; and as you are every Moment liable to this, so *through Fear of Death you are more or less, all your Life-Time subject to Bondage.* This is a most unhappy, but sure not an helpless Case. To you, dear Souls, my Advice is this ;

FIRST, If you would gain this most desirable Fortitude and Tranquility of Mind, *You must directly aim at this happy Attainment ;* and labour to keep it through the whole Course of Life ; whilst you are daily *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.* You must *strive for this Mastery, and strive lawfully — So run, not as uncertainly — so fight, not as one that beateth the Air ; but keep under the Body ;* its Appetites, and its Fears, and *bring them into Subjection.* Take up the Psalmist's Resolution, and take to yourselves the Spirit he discovers in our Text, and say, with him, “ *Though I walk, or am now walking, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil —* If it be possible, I will gain this Mastery. I know “ it is appointed for me once to die, and “ that

2 Cor. x.  
24—27.

“ that I am in my Death-State every Mo-  
 “ ment, I will therefore endeavour to be al-  
 “ ways ready, and always willing to depart  
 “ hence. *Somehow* I must die; and a com-  
 “ fortful Life, and happy Death, free from  
 “ all Fears of Evil, and full of lively and  
 “ glorious Hopes, is so desirable; and the  
 “ Contrary is so dreadful, that if possible, I  
 “ will secure a peaceful Journey through  
 “ this Life, and an happy Exit — such as  
 “ shall do Credit to Religion, give Glory to  
 “ the God of my Life, and terminate in  
 “ Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. To  
 “ this End I will carefully avoid whatever  
 “ would occasion terrifying Apprehensions  
 “ in the Hour of Death, or under its pre-  
 “ sent Prospects: And will leave Nothing  
 “ undone, that may contribute to my pre-  
 “ sent Hope, and future Joy; that when I  
 “ come to die, I may have nothing to do,  
 “ but die, and say like my Saviour, *Father*  
 “ *into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.*”

IT is, my Brethren, for Want of this *Aim*  
 and *Purpose*, that so many good Christians,  
 who have *nothing to fear*, but *every Thing to*  
*hope for*, yet fear, where no Fear is; and  
 must do so all their Life-Time, if they will  
 not

not hearken to this friendly Advice. As *Jonah* thought *he did well to be angry*, so some think, they do well to be *dejected*; and even look upon their Complaints and Fears, as an Expression of Christian *Humility*: Whereas, God is as much the God of *Comfort*, as the God of *Holiness*; and has made as full Provision for the *One* as for the *Other*. We have not only his Holy Commands, for the Rule of our Conduct; but we have his exceeding great and precious Promises, for the Ground of our Faith, and Hope, and Joy. *Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in every Thing give Thanks; for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you.* When real Holiness is actually obtained, and carefully preserved, sure it could be no such hard Matter to gain this Freedom from the Fear of Death; if such holy Souls would think of it, and intend it. What I have said under this Particular, is purely to put you upon thinking for yourselves, and excite you to make this Attempt. The Directions respecting the Manner, how you are to do this, drawn chiefly from the Psalmist's Conduct, come now to be considered.

1 Thess. v.  
16, 17, 18.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Settle in your Minds, and impress upon your Hearts, the same *Sentiments of God and his Providence*, that the Author discovers through the whole of this Psalm. *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures; he leadeth me beside the still Waters. He prepareth a Table for me — my Cup runneth over.* From this Experience of the Care and Protection of Divine Providence, and from the Sort of Pastoral Relation between him and God, he derives his Encouragement to hope in God, for the Remainder of Life; concluding, *Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the Days of my Life.* Nor do his Thoughts and Hopes stop here, but with equal Reason he carries them forward in View and Prospect of Death; and says, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me — thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.* As if he had said, “The same Providence, the same protecting Hand, the same Guardian God, that has hitherto been my Preserver through Life, will be my Preserver through the Remainder of it, and my Support, and Com-  
“ fort



“ fort when I come to die ; I will therefore  
“ fear no Evil. He is able to do for me ex-  
“ ceeding abundantly above all that I can  
“ ask or think ; and he is willing and faith-  
“ ful, who also will do it. Of this he has  
“ given me all the Proof, all the Experience,  
“ and all the Evidence I can wish for, or  
“ desire. O my Soul ! do not forget all his  
“ Benefits. My God brought me into Be-  
“ ing at first, intending my everlasting Con-  
“ tinuance in it. He breathed into me the  
“ Breath of Life, and I became a living  
“ Soul ; and inspired me with the Desires of  
“ *Life and Immortality*. This Desire of Life  
“ he has made the strongest and most un-  
“ alterable Principle of my Nature. He  
“ has implanted in me this Principle with  
“ an Intent to gratify it. Nor is this all ;  
“ but he has inspired me with the Natural  
“ Hopes and Expectations of *Immortality* ;  
“ and has confirmed these by the Gift, the  
“ Doctrine, the Promises, the Death, the  
“ Resurrection, and Glorification of his Be-  
“ loved Son, *the Man Christ Jesus*. Nor is this  
“ all the Evidence and Experience I have  
“ had of the Care and All-sufficiency of my  
“ God : He has already brought me out of

“ one World, and State of Existence into  
 “ another. He formed, preserved, and fa-  
 “ shioned me in the Belly; first fitted me for  
 “ this World, and then brought me into it.  
 “ In the *Morning* of this Life, I was as weak  
 “ and helpless, as I can be in the *Evening* :  
 “ And does that God want either Power or  
 “ Will to sustain me in *Death*, who has sus-  
 “ tained me through the Whole of this *Mor-*  
 “ *tal Life* ? Or to introduce me into *another*  
 “ State of Existence, who brought me into  
 “ *this* ?” From this Topick, we often find  
 the *Psalmist* fetching his Hopes and Conso-  
 lations, not only in Prosperity, as in the  
*Psalm* before us, but even in the deepest Ad-  
 versity. Thus in the *Psalm* immediately  
 foregoing, he prays, Ver. 11. *Be not far*  
*from me, for Trouble is near, and there is none*  
*to help — I am poured out like Water — My*  
*Heart is like Wax, it is melted in the Midst*  
*of my Bowels — My Strength is dried up, and*  
*thou hast brought me into the Dust of the Earth.*  
 But here is his Encouragement, *Thou art he*  
*that took me out of the Womb ; thou didst make*  
*me hope, when I was upon my Mother’s Breasts :*  
*I was cast upon thee from the Womb — Thou*  
*art my God from my Mother’s Belly — Be not*  
*thou*

*thou far from me, O Lord ; O my Strength, haste thee to help me.* Verses 9, 10, 19. You may read to the same Purpose, *Psalms* lxxi. 5—20.

WE have all of us had the like Experience of the Care and Providence of God, from the Beginning of our Lives to this Day. But the Ground of all our Unhappiness is this, though little perceived, Those manifold Blessings of God, which should endear *God* to our Souls, and encourage our Trust in him, serve only to endear *this World* to us, and make us so unwilling, and so afraid to leave it. Strange Perverseness! What can be done for us to make us happy, if the Blessings of God thus alienate our Hearts from him! O let us learn to prefer the Thought of God, and his Providence, to all the World; yea, to this Life itself, and *then we shall fear no Evil. The Lord reigns, let the Earth rejoice, and the Multitude of its Inhabitants be glad.* True Faith in God, and his Providence, will give us the Victory over the World, and over all the Terrors of Death. Assure your Hearts before him in this Respect, and then *fear Death, if you can.*

THIRDLY, Having conceived and settled just Sentiments of God and his Providence, let me farther recommend it to you, frequently to consider, and inculcate upon your Minds, a due Sense of the Power and Disposition of God, the Former and Father of our Spirits, to *sustain*, support, and comfort the *Soul of Man*. *Thou restorest my Soul*, says the *Psalmist*, in the Verse before my Text; upon which he adds, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me — thy Rod and thy Staff, they comfort me*. The Common Providence of God orders the Things around us: The *special Favour and spiritual Aid* of God reaches to the Heart and Soul. The *Outward Man*, the Body, is liable to Infirmities, Afflictions, Decays, and Death; but God the Father of our Spirits, can sustain and comfort the *Soul* — He can perfect his Strength in our Weakness, and enable *our Spirits to bear all our Infirmities*. Indeed if we had no Hope but in *Ourselves*, then the *Soul* would be as helpless as the *Body*, unable to sustain itself, in the Day of Trouble, and at the Hour of Death; but if we resign into the Hands of God, and stay

stay ourselves upon him, then, *as the outward Man perisheth, the inward Man will be renewed Day by Day; for this Cause we faint not.* See how *Asaph* improves this Thought, and how his desponding Soul is restored and revived with it, when his Heart was grieved and pierced within him. *Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast bolden me by thy Right-Hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. — For whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* In this Thought the pure and pious Soul triumphs, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be removed, and the Mountains carried into the Midst of the Sea. The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? Wait on the Lord, be of good Courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart — wait I say on the Lord.* “Now,  
“think, O my Soul, think how often I  
“have been brought low, and the Lord hath

“ helped me. How often have I been ready to say, There is no Hope, I shall go down to the Grave mourning! Under what Weakness and Pains of Body, and Sorrows of Mind, has my God sustained me; and comforted me again, after the Days in which I have seen Adversity! And am I yet to learn, that God is he that bindeth up the Broken-hearted, and comforteth those that mourn? Has not *Tribulation* wrought in me *Patience*; and *Patience* *Experience*; and *Experience* *Hope*? Let *Patience* then have her perfect Work, that I may be perfect and entire, lacking Nothing. Hitherto nothing has befallen me, but what is common to Man; and O All-supporting Thought! My God is faithful, who will not suffer me to be tried above my Ability, but will with every Trial find a Way for my Escape, that I may be able to bear it. So that I will boldly say, the Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear. Why then art thou cast down, O my Soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the Health of my Countenance, and my God.”



O MY Friends, God will be with us, whilst we are with him, he will never leave us; he will never forsake us; much less when we stand in the greatest Need of his Presence and Aid. This was our dear Saviour's Support and Consolation, when he came to die. *Behold the Hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* If you ask, What is intended by this? We have the Answer and Explanation in my Text, from whence the Phrase seems to be borrowed, *Thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.* As the Rod and Staff in the Hands of the Shepherd are the Instruments of Protection to the helpless Sheep; so are the All-sufficient Perfections of God, to the pious Soul, which can say,

John xvi.  
32.

Tho' in the Paths of Death I tread,  
With gloomy Horrors overspread;  
My stedfast Heart shall fear no Ill:  
For thou, O Lord, art with me still.  
Thy friendly Crook shall give me Aid,  
And guide me thro' the awful Shade.

THIS Scripture-Phrase, *God is with me*, and all those which express the *Presence of God* with his faithful Servants, have a plain, most delightful, and comprehensive Meaning, denoting not his essential Presence common to all, nor his Presence as an unconcerned Spectator, but his real Agency, and actual Exertion of his spiritual divine Power, and fatherly Goodness. *Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.* If left to ourselves, Death is an Enemy too hard for us to encounter without Fear. If left to Sorrow without Hope, the Death and Loss of our dear Friends, and Relatives, would overset our Minds with Grief and Sorrow: And the parting with this World, our Friends, and all our Enjoyments here, and being dislodged from these Bodies, the Medium of so many grateful Sensations, would be still more intollerable, if we had no Hope of the Aid and Presence of God. The Strength of our Souls, when Flesh and Heart fails; the Preservation of the precious Soul, when this earthly Body perishes; our Introduction into a new and better State; the investing us with our House which is from Heaven, these are Things beyond our  
own

own Power, though essential to our Safety in Death, and our Happiness after it. Now, to all these, and to every needful Purpose, *God will be with me.* “He that brought me into this World, will introduce me into another. — The same fatherly Being, and the same Power, which attended upon my Birth, will watch over my Death. — The same God, that has been my Guardian through the Whole Length of this Valley of Death, will not leave me when I come to the End of it.” *What shall we then say to these Things? The Answer follows, If God be for us, who can be against us? Or, what shall separate us from the Love of God? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? — Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us: For I am perswaded, that neither Death nor Life, nor Things present, nor Things to come, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom. viii.  
31—39.

ONE Thought more under this Head — If this Life be continued for any considerable Time, the Servants of God have a thousand Times more to fear and apprehend from  
*Life,*

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John xvii.  
4.

Heb. xiii.  
5, 6.

*Life*, than from *Death*. During this *Life*, we are called out to Services, Sorrows, and Temptations — here we may count upon much to do, and much to suffer — here we have a Part to act : But when *Death* comes, our *Work* is over, as our Saviour's was, the Evening before the Day of his *Death*. *I have finished*, says he, *the Work which thou gavest me to do*. Our Part in *Death* is purely *passive* ; we have then Nothing to do ; we ought to have Nothing to do ; for Nothing can be done by us, but *submit* — yielding up ourselves to God, and hope and wait for his *Salvation* — committing ourselves to God, as to a faithful Creator, who is *able to keep that which is committed to him*. Now, the *Work* is God's, and not *our's* ; and when it comes to be his, and *his only*, it cannot miscarry. To every one of his Servants he has said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper and I will not fear*. This leads on to another Direction.

FOURTHLY, Look daily beyond *Death* itself, in the lively Exercise of that *Faith*, which is the *Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen*. If you look  
only

only around you upon this *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, or look no farther than the End of it ; if your Views terminate here, no Wonder if all be dreadful : But look forward into the future and better State, to that Life and Immortality which is brought to Light, and the Dread will vanish. What the Men of this World look upon as the *End* of Life, to the good Man, is the *Begining* of Life : And what they call the *Gate* of Death, is really the *Door of Entrance* into Immortal Life. Let your Faith and Hope then stretch forward beyond the Vail, and then you cannot Fear. *For this Cause*, says the Apostle, *we faint not, but though the Outward Man perish, the inward Man is renewed Day by Day — while we look at the Things which are not seen ; for Things which are seen are temporal, but Things not seen are eternal.*

2 Cor. iv.  
16, 18.

To guilty Minds, Death is the *King of Terrors* ; and to the purest Minds, there could be no cheering Hope, if no Prospect after Death. Yea, in that Case, *Annihilation* would be far more tolerable to the *Wicked*, than to the *Righteous and Holy* : for Virtue and Piety endear Life and Being ; but Vice renders it a Burden. The Thought of  
a God

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Mat. xxv.  
34.

a God could no longer yield Comfort to a departing Soul, if that God had made no farther Provision for its Being and Happiness. But adored be God, there is a *Kingdom prepared for the Righteous, from the Foundation of the World*; The Door into it is now open, and Life and Immortality brought to Light. We know enough of Heaven, if we will be at Pains to impress the Knowledge of it upon our Hearts, to give us the Victory over the Love of this Life and World, and over the Dread of Death. *There we shall be for ever with the Lord Jesus, and be like him* in Holiness and Happiness. There is no Pain, nor Sorrow, nor Death, nor Fear of it. There we shall exist for ever, free from all disturbing Company — Partakers of social, spiritual Happiness — supported in Existence with a constant Fulness of Supplies, adapted to our Nature — there we shall be satisfied — there is Fulness of Joy and Happiness for ever, in Kind and Degree far exceeding our present Apprehensions; *for Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him.* Besides, our Title to the future,



is infinitely more secure, than our Title to the *present* Life. To this *Life* we have no Title at all, but present *Possession*; liable to be turned out any Moment, without a Moment's Warning: But the good Man's Title to *Eternal Life*, is secured by the Word and Faithfulness of God; and what can we wish for more? "Have I then so much Knowledge and Assurance of Heaven and Eternal Life, How willing should I be to leave this World, and meet Death to go thither? How unworthy my Christian Profession, and High-Calling of God, if I cannot from what I feel within, say, *I loath it, I would not live here always! I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better?* O my Soul! look forward from the Mount of Gospel Promises, and take a fair View of that good Land, the Heavenly *Canaan*, provided for my Eternal Settlement, after my Journey through this *Vale of Death*, and the Prospect will allay my Fears, and deprive Death of all its Terrors; and enable me to say, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil.*" I only add,

LASTLY,

LASTLY, To be always fearless, and always ready, we must live in a careful Abstinence from Sin, and a constant, regular, uniform Discharge of every incumbent Duty, both as *Men*, and as *Christians*; *living in all the Ordinances and Commands of God blameless. Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find thus watching.* — Come at what Watch he will, still *blessed is that Servant.* This is entering into Heaven, and having our Conversation there, whilst here upon Earth; or as in the Close of the Psalm before us, *it is dwelling in the House of God for ever.*

I HAVE thus laid before you the Directions suggested in my *Text* and *Context*, in order to your living the Life, and dying the Death of the Righteous, and having your latter End like his.

I SHALL now conclude with an Address and Exhortation to all of you, to prepare for Death; and to pious and good Persons, not to put from them that Comfort they have a Right to. If when we come to die, we would fear no Evil, we must be prepared and provided *aforehand*. All the *Wise Virgins* can do, when Death comes, is *to trim their*

*their Lamps*, by rousing up their pious Sentiments, and divine Affections; their Faith and Hope, and Trust in God, which they have cultivated and treasured up in their Souls before. The Time of Death is no Season for purchasing this Oil of Joy. Should negligent Fools now attempt it, the *Door will be shut*, before any Thing can be done to the Purpose; and *the Things that belong to their Peace, for ever hid from their Eyes*. What is this Life given us for, but to prepare for Death and Heaven? And none of us have one Day to spare or trifle away.

AND you who have passed the Time of your sojourning here, in a Course of Virtue and Piety, and are at Peace with God, to whom Death must be *safe*, do not stop here; but as you have conquered and overcome the *Power of Sin*, labour to vanquish the unreasonable and troublesome *Fears of Death*. The Credit of Religion, and the Glory of God, demand it from you. The Interest, Comfort, and Encouragement of all around you, call for it. And to come nearer Home, the Peace and Comfort of your own Souls require it. Do not rest, do not stop short of the highest Attainments of Holiness and Happiness;

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Happiness; but reckon every *Degree*, as well as every *Kind* of spiritual Felicity, as due to your own Souls; which have not what is their just Portion whilst they want any Thing of that holy Fortitude and Comfort, which God has provided for them that love him.

AND do not think your Life here of too great Importance to your *Family*, or to the *World*. Possibly it may be expedient both for you and them, that you should go away. Our Saviour expressly tells his Disciples so; *John xvi. 7. Nevertheless I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; and this at a Time, when the Interest of his Disciples, and of his Religion, then in its Infancy, seemed in human Probability, to call for his longer Continuance here upon Earth. God only knows, When is the fittest Time, and whether our Life or Death will be of most Service; that God who has said, leave your fatherless Children, and I will preserve them alive, and let your Widows trust in me. If therefore God should call, stand prepared for taking leave of Your's, as your Saviour took leave of his Disciples. And now I am no more in the World, but these are in the World,* and

*Jer. xlix. 11.*

*John xvii. 11.*

*How to conquer the Fear of Death.*

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*and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through  
thine own Name, those whom thou hast given  
me. I pray not that thou shouldest take them  
out of the World, but keep them from the Evil.  
— Sanctify them by thy Truth, thy Word is  
Truth.* God can make the Memory of a  
pious Parent deceased, of more Authority and  
Influence, than when alive.

BUT, why so anxious, O pious Soul,  
purely on *thy own Account*? Why unwill-  
ingly content to leave this World, and ex-  
change it for Heaven and Eternal Life, when  
unwelcome Death will suffer thee to stay no  
longer? Why so uneasy and afraid to die?  
O Christian, where is thy Faith? How con-  
trary this Frame, to the natural Bias and  
Workings, of the Heaven-born Soul! How  
inconsistent with the desirable Peace and For-  
titude of Mind! How vain! — How fruit-  
less! — How unbecoming even a *Man*, who  
has had so many Years to prepare, knowing  
himself every Moment liable to Death! For  
Shame *lift up the Hands that hang down* —  
lift them up to the God of your Life, who  
has *redeemed you from all your Enemies*, and  
particularly from Death, *that you may serve  
him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteous-*  
X *ness*

*ness before him all the Days of your Lives. — Do this, and then you may boldly say, Yea though I pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff, they comfort me.*

*NOW unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy; to the only wise God and our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever. Amen.*







# S E R M O N XIV.

The great DUTY of DRAWING NEAR  
TO GOD, considered and explained.



PSALM lxxiii. 28.

— *It is good for me to draw near to God.*

I N the Close of the preceding  
Psalm it is said, *The Prayers of  
David the Son of Jesse are ended.*

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This Psalm, and the ten following, are ascribed to *Asaph*. We find in the Jewish History, that *Asaph* was called a SEER; which Title is explained, 1 Sam. ix. 9: *He that was afterwards called a PROPHET, was beforetime called a SEER; that is, a Wise Good Man; who was renowned for his Knowledge of God, and Acquaintance with the Nature and Tendency of moral Actions: Who from hence could discern the Signs of*

*the Times*, and predict when Happiness or Misery, was coming upon a Person or People. The Want of such Wise and Good Men in his Day, *Asaph* laments in the next Psalm, Ver. 9. *We see not our Signs; there is no more any Prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.* *Asaph* was a Poet, a Divine Poet, as well as a Seer; and His, as well as *David's* Composures, were introduced into the Publick Worship of the Jews, and made Use of to assist their Devotion, after the Authors of them were dead. Thus we read, that in the Days, when *Hezekiah* was King, *He, and the Princes, commanded the Levites to sing Praise unto the Lord, with the Words of David, and of Asaph the Seer.*

2 Chron.  
xxix. 30.

If we judge of *Asaph* from these several Composures, which are come down to us in his Name, we may see wherein his chief Talent, his Spirit of Wisdom and Discernment lay: Namely, in an Acquaintance with God — with the Will of God — with the Laws and Measures of his Government over Men; and with the Natural Tendency of Moral Actions — of Virtue and Vice — of Piety and Impiety. He saw, that Irreligion  
and

and Wickedness, whatever Pomp and Prosperity may attend it for a while, yet it never fails to terminate in Misery and Destruction: And, on the other Hand, Righteousness and Piety, whatever Hardships and Difficulties it may meet and struggle with for a Time, yet it always ends in Satisfaction and Happiness.

IF we consider this *Psalms* in the common Method of Interpretation, as containing a particular *History* of *Asaph's* own Case, we should be led to conclude, that he was but *newly* come to this Knowledge; that he had long lived a virtuous and pious Life, in Expectation, that on this Account, God would bless him with *temporal Prosperity*; but finding himself disappointed, he was upon the Point of renouncing his Religion, and sinking into Infidelity and Despair. But this I think, is a wrong Method of interpreting *This*, and many other *Psalms*. It is not to be understood as an *History* of the Author's *particular* Case; but as a Representation, in the Person of the Author, of what is a *common* Case; and this in order to introduce, in the most inoffensive and interesting Manner, such Thoughts and Arguments, as are most

proper to shame such imperfect Servants of God, out of their false Principles, and groundless Expectations, and lead them to better Sentiments, and better Hopes. This View and Method of Interpretation, will heighten our Apprehensions, both of the Author, and of this Psalm itself. When we deliberate, Can we think *Asaph* intends himself? But rather is *personating* the many, whose inward Language he speaks, when he says, Ver. 2. *But as for me, my Feet were almost gone; my Steps had well nigh slipt; for I was envious at the Foolish, when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked.* Having at large described their Wickedness and Prosperity, he adds, Ver. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency; for all the Day long have I been plagued, and chastened every Morning.* This is not the *History of Asaph's own Heart*; but of too many Others, whom he wants to reform, as appears from the next Verse. *If I say, I will speak thus, behold I should offend against the Generation of thy Children.* The Intention of what follows to the End, is this; viz. Though from the present Face and Appearance of Things, the Prosperity of the Wicked,

Wicked, and the Adversity of the Righteous, has been a Difficulty with many, yet we need only go *into the Sanctuary of God*, retire into our Hearts where God resides; consider the inward Misery of the Wicked, and the inward Happiness of the Righteous: And then look forward to the End of Both, and the whole Difficulty is solved. *Then understood I their End: Surely thou didst set them (the Wicked) in slippery Places; thou castedst them down into Destruction. How are they brought into Desolation, as in a Moment? They are utterly consumed with Terrors. As a Dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their Image.* But as for Me, may every truly good Man say, Ver. 23. *I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me by thy Right-Hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth, that I desire besides thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever. For lo, they that are far from thee, shall perish: — But it is good for me to draw near to God.*

*The great Duty of*

I HAVE thus given you a general View of this pious and most excellent *Psalms*. The Part which the *Author* sustains, through the whole of it, is, that of a Wise and Good Man, who is so far from envying the vain and short-lived Prosperity of the Wicked, that he pities them, and all that envy them. As for himself, he shews an entire Satisfaction and Confidence in God, under all his Adversities; and endeavours to teach all pious and well-disposed Minds the same Lesson. The Language of his Soul is this, ‘ My  
 ‘ Virtue and Piety is not vain; and instead  
 ‘ of fainting or drawing back from God, under any Pressures of Adversity, *I will draw  
 ‘ nearer and nearer to him*, confide in him,  
 ‘ and both hope, and patiently wait for his  
 ‘ Salvation: *For they, that are far from God  
 ‘ shall perish — but it is good for me to draw  
 ‘ near to God.*’ In discoursing from this last Clause I shall,

I. CONSIDER the Meaning of this Scripture-Phrase, and shew what is intended by *drawing near to God*; and wherein this Duty and Happiness consists.

II. I WOULD



II. I WOULD enforce this Duty by shewing, that *it is good for me, and for Every One, to do so.*

I. LET us consider the Meaning of this Scripture-Phrase, and shew what is intended by *drawing near to God*; and wherein this Duty and Happiness consists.

Now in Order to understand this, and a Multitude of Scripture-Phrases, let it be well considered in general, That whilst we tabernacle in these Animal Bodies, and are hereby confined to this Earthly State, and converse with our Fellow-Creatures with bodily Organs of Speech, we have no Words or Language, by which we can converse, and convey our inward Sentiments and Affections, but *the Language of this World*; and the particular Language of that Age and Nation, that we are acquainted with. Now the Words of every Nation, in their *original* Use, and *literal* proper Sense, are given to, or drawn from, Things or Beings, which are of a *Material* or *Animal* Nature. Whilst in this World, and in these Bodies, we have no Language, that is, the Language of the  
Future

Future State, or of pure Spirits : None, but what is borrowed from the Language of this World, and when applied to *Spiritual Beings*, and to *Spiritual Subjects*, is always to be understood, not in a *literal*, but in a *figurative* and *allusive* Sense ; such as Common Sense, when attended to, will easily explain. The Want of Attention to this obvious Remark, has been the first Inlet to all the Idolatry, Superstition, and Enthusiasm, that has entered into the Imaginations and Practices of Men, in all Ages and Nations. Consequently a due Attention to this Remark, would help to banish them again. For instance, when the *Deity* was spoke of as a PERSON, Men were led to image him both to their Eyes and Minds, under the Resemblance of a MAN. Hence *Idolatry* and *Image Worship*. When they heard or read of *cleansing* and *purifying* themselves, and the like, taking these Words in a *literal Sense*, they made use of the same *material Elements* for the Purification of their *Souls*, that they did for cleansing and purifying of their *Bodies*, or *Garments*. Hence the Rise of Superstitious Modes and Forms, Rites and Ceremonies. And now when weak Minds  
hear

hear or read the same Words used to express the *spiritual* Actions, Motions, Sensations, and Affections of the Mind, which are used to express the animal Actions, Motions, Sensations, and Affections of the Body, taking these in a *literal Sense*, they are led into all the Wilds of an Enthusiastick Imagination. This is bad enough; and yet this not the worst of it. For many seeing the Absurdity of this Enthusiasm; and thinking of no Sense, but the full and *literal* Sense, to be put on such Words and Phrases, they immediately turn them into *Ridicule*, and banish from their Hearts all pious Affections; and give up all spiritual Devotion, as they can find no other *Language* in which to express the Sentiments and Affections of a pious Soul, but what is borrowed from the same Fountain, and liable to the same Treatment, if understood in its *primary* and *literal* Sense.

THESE Remarks perhaps appear a Digression; but they will be found otherwise, when applied to my *Text*, which will help farther to explain the Remark itself, and shew its Usefulness and Application, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* We are now proposing to inquire into the Meaning  
of

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of this Phrase, which can never be understood, nor reconciled to the first Principles of Religion, without understanding the Language in the *figurative* Sense and Manner, intended in the above Remark. *Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish — But it is good for me to draw near to God.* This Phrase in its *original* and *literal* Sense, is evidently used to express the Motion of two *material Bodies*, or *animal Beings*, when they quit their State of distant Separation in respect of Place, and draw near to each other. Now this cannot be said with Truth or Propriety, in a *literal Sense*, concerning God, and you, or Me, or any Being in the Universe. For God, we all know, is *essentially*, and equally present every where, and with every Being, in an uniform Manner: So that in this *literal* Sense, no good Man can *draw near to God*, nor any wicked Man *be far from him*. *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being.* In Proof of this I need not enlarge.

Acts xvii.  
27, 28.

HAVING mentioned this to prevent any Enthusiastick Conceptions, or vain Attempts to *draw near to God*, in this *literal Sense*; I  
now

now proceed to shew the Import of this Phrase, when used in a *spiritual* or *moral Sense*; as denoting a pious and good Man's Access to God in the Exercise of his *Spiritual*, Rational, Moral Powers, and Divine Affections. The *Beings* here spoken of, as *far from each other*, or *drawing near*, are purely *Spiritual*, viz. Our own *Spirits*, and God the Father of our *Spirits*; and consequently the *Access* must be understood purely in a *spiritual Manner and Sense*: And this not respecting the *metaphysical Nature*, or *Essence* of the *Deity*, or of our own *Spirits*, of which we have no Idea or Conception at all; and concerning which, the Holy Scriptures, are perfectly silent. This last Thought would have prevented the Rise of the most perplexing Controversies, that have inflamed the Christian Church; and if attended to, would remove and silence them for ever. But, as I said, *We draw nigh to God*, in the Exercise of those *Spiritual*, Rational Powers, and Divine Affections, with which God has endowed the Mind and Soul of Man. And *God draws nigh to us* in the friendly Exercise of his Powers in our Favour, and the actual

actual Communication of his spiritual Blessings.

EXPERIENCE proves, that the Mind, or Soul of Man, *made in the Likeness of God*, is capable by the Exercise of *Thought* and *Meditation*, of expanding itself as far and wide as the Creation, and traversing by devout Contemplation, through the *Universe*; yea, it can extend its Thoughts beyond the most distant Limits of the Creation, into the Immensity of boundless *Space*; and upon the first Attention to the Order of God's visible Creation, may every where discover the fullest and most adorable Evidences of the Being and Perfections of God. Though to the *Eye* of the Body, God himself, as well as every pure Spirit, is by Nature invisible; yet to the *Eye* of the Mind, *the invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen*; even his eternal Power, and never-ceasing Government. This Evidence of the *Deity* depends not upon a Chain of learned and speculative Arguments; but arises from *Mental Intuition*; being *Self-evident*; whilst every Man has constantly set before him, as clear and full Evidence of the *Being and Existence of God, the Creator* and



and *Preserver* of ALL, as he has of his *own* Being, or of the Existence of any Thing around him in the World. Now, by the Exercise of such pious Thoughts, serious Reflections, and devout Meditations, the Mind and Heart of Man *draws near to God*.

As for the Ungodly and Wicked, they are said *to be far from God*, as in the Introduction of our *Text*; because *God is not in all their Thoughts*: Or if they know God, they glorify him not as God, neither are they thankful; but their foolish Hearts are darkened. They and their Thoughts, are so took up with this World, and the Objects of Sense, that they have no Time to think upon God, and worship him as God: And their Lives often become so vicious, that they say in their Hearts, *O that there were no God*. Hence it is said, *there is in them an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God — that they live without God in the World — not liking to retain God in their Knowledge*, they say to him, *depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*. They indulge to no truly pious Thoughts, and are destitute of all pious Dispositions and Affections. In one Word, These are the Ungodly, who  
are

*are far from God: And God is far from them. — They have no Interest in his special Favour, nor any Share of his special Blessings and Consolations.*

Col. ii. 5.  
1 Cor. v. 3.

ON the other Hand, The pious and good Man *draws nigh to God.* As Paul when at Rome, writes to the Christian Churches in Greece, *Though I be absent in the Body, yet I am with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your Order, and the Steadfastness of your Faith.* As if he had said, “My *Thoughts* are “with you, and my *Heart* is with you.” Thus the pious and good Man *draws nigh to God.* — His *Thoughts* and his *Heart* are with him, and the Desires and Out-goings of his Soul are towards God. In a governing Manner he *sets God always before him; and lives as seeing Him, who is invisible.* His *Meditations upon God are sweet,* and frequent. His Devotion is cordial and sincere. His inward Affections correspond with the Perfections of God. He *stands in Awe, and sinneth not — offers the Sacrifice of Righteousness, and then puts his Trust in the Lord.* Thus by *Divine Sentiments and Affections,* God becomes present with the pious Soul, whilst the Heart,  
and

and Soul is up to God, and present with him.

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XIV.

I HAVE thus given you a *general* Account what is intended by these Phrases, *being far from God* — and what by our *drawing nigh to him*. *They that are far from thee shall perish.* — *But it is good for me to draw near to God.* But to be more particular.

I. FAITH in God ; Or a Belief of his Being, and Acquaintance with his Perfections and moral Government, is the *first* Principle of the Soul's Access to God. — Of this, inferior *Brute-Creatures* are *naturally* incapable ; and so are the Children of Men in their *Infant-State*. Consequently, the first Step in our drawing near to God, is made, when we first *think upon God* ; and are brought to the Knowledge and Remembrance of our Creator : And in Proportion as we go on advancing in this Belief and Knowledge of God — of his Being, Perfections, and Will, we *draw nearer and nearer to him*. *Without something of this Faith, it is impossible to please God, or draw near to him* Heb. xi. 6. *at all ; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is ; and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* All do not begin

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to

to *think*, much less to *think upon God*, at the same Age; which is chiefly owing to their Parents, and such as are about them in their first Years. Nor do all *enlarge* and *improve* their Divine Faith and Knowledge; and consequently get nearer and nearer to God in this Respect, with the same *Speed*, and in the same *Degree*. And so *imperfect* is our Knowledge and Comprehension of God, that there is, and always will be, Room left for very large Improvement—for drawing nearer and nearer to God; by exalting our Conceptions, and enlarging our Acquaintance with the Perfections of God, and the Laws and Measures of his all-wise and righteous Government.

THIS is evidently the first Principle of the Soul's Access to God; and they, who are destitute of this *Divine Faith* and *Knowledge*, are *far from God*, and *must perish*. They are no more capable of that Happiness, which results from the Enjoyment of God in this, or in any future State, than the *Brutes*; seeing they both *live without God in the World*—the One, through Necessity of Nature—the Other, through impious Thoughtlessness, and sinful Choice. Whilst in this  
World

World they cannot live in Subjection to the Will and Authority of God, since God is not in all their Thoughts : Nor can they enjoy any of those Consolations and Supports, which arise from stedfast Faith and lively Hope in God. However, this is not all, though the first and Foundation Principle : There is a large Superstructure to be raised upon it, before our Souls will ascend up to God and Heaven.

2. In *drawing near to God*, we must cherish in our Hearts and Souls, pure and *spiritual* Affections, corresponding to the Knowledge and Conceptions we have of God. A Man may be educated and trained up, so as to conceive very clear and large Apprehensions of God, in a *speculative* Way ; and both talk of God, and perform the Formalities of Devotion in a correct Manner, and yet remain alienated from God, being destitute of correspondent Affections, and his Heart far from him. Speaking upon this Subject of *drawing nigh to God by Faith in him*, says Dr. Clarke, in his first Sermon, “ There are  
“ few who consider these first Principles of  
“ Religion, so *seriously* and so frequently as  
“ they ought to do, and in *such* a Manner,

*The great Duty of*

“ as to cause them to produce their proper  
 “ Effect, by influencing their whole Lives  
 “ and Conversations. For *Knowledge* is but  
 “ a dormant Habit, if not excited by con-  
 “ stant Meditation : And *Powers* are of no  
 “ Use, if not produced into Act. Right  
 “ Notions of the Being and Attributes of  
 “ God, every one knows are the Foundati-  
 “ on of all Religion : But then, this Know-  
 “ ledge must not be a bare Speculation ; but  
 “ a serious, practical, affecting Impression,  
 “ and deep Sense upon the Mind ; of a Su-  
 “ preme Being, who created the World by  
 “ his Power, preserves and governs it by his  
 “ Goodness and Wisdom, and will judge it  
 “ with Justice, Mercy, and Truth : Of *such*  
 “ a Supreme Being, whose Glory no Eye  
 “ can behold — whose Majesty, no Thought  
 “ can comprehend — whose Power, no  
 “ Strength can resist — from whose Presence,  
 “ no Swiftnefs can flee — from whose Know-  
 “ ledge, no Secret can be concealed — whose  
 “ Justice, no Art can evade — whose Good-  
 “ ness, every Creature partakes of.” This  
 is that *Faith*, without which, it is impossible  
 to please God, or to draw near to him. And  
 certainly, this Faith cannot enter into the  
 Heart



Heart and Soul, but it must awake those *spiritual* Affections, which God has implanted in us. For the Soul of Man has not only an *Eye* of its own, as well as the Body: But it has *Affections* of its own, as well as the Body — *Spiritual* Affections, such as Awe, Reverence, Love, Fear, Hope, Joy, and the like, which *spiritual* Objects can awake in as perceptible a Manner, and to as high a Degree, not to say much higher, as the *Animal Affections* are capable of being raised to by *Animal* Objects, or by *material* Impressions. And shall not our Faith in God, and our Conceptions of his Attributes and Government, strike upon our Hearts, and awaken these spiritual Affections of the Soul, and attract the pure and pious Soul to God, whilst it drives the Impious and Wicked from him? For *the Devils also believe and tremble.*

WE *draw nigh to God*, and find ourselves *near to him*, when our serious Thoughts are employed in pious and devout Meditations upon God, surveying the Excellencies of his Nature, and the Goodness of his Works — his Works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption: — When his transcendent Excel-

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Mal. i. 6.

lencies raise our Adoration ; and his Fatherly Goodness awakes our Reverence — *When we honour him, as a Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master* — When we become *Imitators of him as dear Children* — When his *moral and amiable Perfections* are set before the Eyes of our Minds, and have a due Impression upon our Hearts and Affections — When by holy Meditations upon his unspotted Purity, and perfect Righteousness, we find ourselves transforming into his Likeness — When his Fatherly Goodness awakens our Gratitude ; and his Divine Mercy and Compassion draws forth our lively Hope, Trust, and Joy. These are *Affections* of the Soul, corresponding to the *Perfections* of God ; and when these are felt in lively Exercise, then it is that we *draw nigh to God*. To borrow the Language of *Job*, at other Times, *We hear of him by the Hearing of the Ear ; but now the Eye of the Soul seeth him*. Or as *Paul* expresses it, in speculative Faith and Knowledge, *we see but as through a Glass darkly ; but now Face to Face* — Yea, *with open Face beholding the Glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same Image, as from Glory to Glory*. This, my Friends,

Friends, is pleasing, profitable Devotion —  
 This is the Life and Spirit of Devotion —  
 This is *coming into God's Presence ; standing before him ; and worshiping the Father of our Spirits in Spirit and in Truth.* But as we cannot always be thus happily employed, in getting, and keeping near to God, whilst in this World, it is required,

3. THAT in our whole Conduct we subject ourselves to the Authority of God, and live in constant Obedience to his Will and Commands ; *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly ; denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts. If thou prepare thine Heart, and stretch out thine Hands towards him ; If Iniquity be in thine Hand, put it far away, and let not Wickedness dwell in thy Tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy Face without Spot ; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear. But to the Wicked God saith, To what Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me — When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your Hand to tread my Courts ? Bring no more vain Oblations — your Sabbaths, and the Calling of Assemblies I cannot away with ; it is Iniquity, even your solemn Meeting. — And when ye spread your Hands,*

Job xi. 13,  
14, 15.

Isaiah i.  
11—18.

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Prov. xv.  
8.

Mic. vi.  
6, 7, 8.

Isaiah lix.  
1, 2.

James iv.  
8, 10.

*I will hide mine Eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear. Your Hands are full of Blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do well — Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord ; but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God ? — He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?*

When Sinners attempt to draw nigh to God, you may read what separates, and the only Thing that can separate, betwixt God and the human Soul, *Behold, the Lord's Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save ; neither his Ear heavy, that it cannot hear : But your Iniquities have separated between you and your God ; and your Sins have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear.* Accordingly the Apostle James paraphrases our Text thus, *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you ; but then, cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts, ye double-minded.*

Then

Then *Humble yourselves in the Sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* We Christians have a new and living Way consecrated for us into the *Holy of Holies*, into the more immediate Presence of God himself, and are encouraged to draw nigh to him, as Children to a Father — In Christ Jesus we have Boldness and Access with Confidence, by one Spirit unto the Father : But then, *We must draw near with a true Heart*, if we would do it in full Assurance of Faith ; having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience — holding fast the Profession of our Faith, without wavering — and consider one another to provoke unto Love, and to good Works. To attempt to draw near to God, to hold Communion, and claim Acquaintance with him, by Prayers and Devotion, either in publick or private, and then go out from him, and live in the Practice of Sin and Wickedness, is the most contradictory, vain, and absurd Practice in the World. To suppress this Practice, which was risen up in St. John's Time, he says, *God is Light*, God is perfect Purity, and in him is no Darknes at all. If we say that we have Communion with him, and walk in Darknes, or Wickedness, we lie, and do not the Truth :

Eph. ii. 18.  
and iii. 12.Heb. x.  
19—24.1 John i.  
4.

But

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XIV.1 John ii.  
2.John xiv.  
15—27.

*But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, then we have Communion one with another — My little Children, these Things write I unto you, that ye sin not — and that your Joy may be full. Subjection of Will to the Authority of God, and uniform Obedience to his Laws and Commands, is the fullest Proof and clearest Evidence of our Nearness to him, and Interest in him. I conclude this Particular with our Saviour's Direction and Promise. One of his Disciples, not understanding what he had said before, asks him, How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the World? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and if he keep my Words, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him. As if he had said, “ Do but live in Obedience to my Commands, and your own happy Experience will explain and confirm this my Promise. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, which the World cannot receive, shall come upon you, and ye shall know it; because it dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” To do Actions materially good, and live a sober,*  
and



and righteous Life, from private, prudential, and worldly Principles and Motives, will not produce this spiritual, divine Satisfaction: But a Life of Virtue and Piety, proceeding from a good Heart, and true Faith in God, will be productive of it; as sure as there is a God, *who to the Pure, will shew himself pure; but to the Froward, will shew himself froward: For the Just shall live by Faith: But if any Man draw back, God has said it under all Dispensations, My Spirit shall have no Pleasure in him.* \*See Jer. vi. 8. Hab. ii. 3, 4. and Heb. x. 38. There is but one Thing now remains; to compleat our Access to God, and place us in the nearest and happiest State and Relation to him, *viz.*

4. THAT in Consequence of the *three* Steps, before mentioned, We proceed to resign up ourselves to the Disposal of God, and place an entire Trust and Confidence in him. — When we have *first* gained just and worthy Apprehensions of God fixed in our Souls; of his Being, Perfections, and Will. — And *secondly*, We have awakened in us Affections, and Dispositions of Heart and Mind, corresponding to these Apprehensions. — And *thirdly*,

*thirdly*, Under the Influence of these divine Sentiments, and pious Affections, we submit ourselves to the Authority of God, and live in constant, regular Obedience to his Will and Commands; Then, *lastly*, it is both our Duty, and the Completion of our Happiness, to resign up ourselves to the Disposal of God for Time and Eternity; and to place an entire Trust and Confidence in God. This is *drawing nigh to God with a pure Heart, in full Assurance of Faith*. This constitutes the present Perfection and Happiness of Man. This Hope is an Anchor to the Soul, sure and stedfast, entering within the Vail; by which Hope we draw nigh to God. This is the Nexus, the Tie that unites us to God, in the firmest Bonds of Resignation, Faith, Hope, Trust, and Confidence: And in the Stedfastness of this well-grounded Faith, and Hope, consists our nearest Access to God, and our chief Felicity in this World. This is the ultimate Thing that *Asaph* intended in our Subject, as he explains himself in the Context. Through the whole Psalm, he discovers, that he had gained worthy Apprehensions of God, and correspondent Affections towards him — *had cleansed his*

*his Heart, and washed his Hands in Innocency: And now says he, It is good for me to draw near to God, adding, I have put my Trust in the Lord God. Though he saw the short-lived Prosperity of the Wicked; and he himself laboured under many Afflictions. Nevertheless, says he, I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden me by my Right-Hand: Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever. For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish — but it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my Trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy Works. As if he had said, “ I “ have a divine Right to trust in God — I “ am allowed and encouraged to do so: Re- “ turn therefore unto thy Rest, O my Soul; “ and rest not till thou can say, My Heart is “ fixed, my Heart is fixed, trusting in God.” By this Trust and Confidence, the pure and pious Soul finds a Sanctuary in God, and in every one of his Perfections. — His Omnipresence renders him a very present Help —*

His

*The great Duty of*

His Omnipotence, is a strong Tower, to which we may continually resort — His Omniscience, makes him our sure Guide and Guardian — His Goodness, is an undrainable Fountain of Supplies — His Mercy compassionates our Wants, Weakness, and Unworthiness — His Justice will vindicate our Injuries, and bring forth our Righteousness as the Light, and our Judgment as the Noon-Day. — His unchangeable Faithfulness, is our Security against all change in his Temper — And his universal and eternal Government, is our Security in Life and Death, for Time and Eternity. Thus we see, that by *drawing nigh to God*, the pure and pious Soul loses all its Wants and Weaknesses in the Fulness and All-sufficiency of God; and can say, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want — Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for GOD IS WITH ME; his Rod and his Staff they comfort me.*

IT now remains that I should shew, SECONDLY, That *it is good for Me*, and for every One, *to draw near to God*. But this I shall make the Subject of another Discourse. Not that the Thing itself needs any *Proof*;  
for

for it is *self-evident*. But the Subject will afford agreeable Entertainment. Here we behold the real *Kingdom of God*, and of *Heaven*; where God rules over *spiritual Beings*, and *Moral Agents*, and imparts to them his divine and spiritual Blessings, whilst they voluntarily submit to him, and confide in him. *They have Bread to eat, which the World knows not of*. Here is Heaven upon Earth — Heaven actually begun and enjoyed. The *Tabernacle of God is with these Men*. He dwells with them, and they are his People, and God himself is their God. For what is *Heaven*, but the Enjoyment of God, in such *Nearness* to him as we have been considering? And, what is the Happiness of Heavenly Spirits, but what results from the *spiritual* Sight and Knowledge of God; the Contemplation of his displayed Perfections; and the Enjoyment of those *spiritual* Blessings, which result from the Exercise of divine Love, Trust, and Joy. When freed from this Vail of Flesh, which calls for so much of our Time and Thoughts, and confines us to this Earth, we hope to be more at Liberty to *draw nigh to God*; to behold  
still

still more glorious Displays of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; and to be established for ever in his eternal and everlasting Kingdom; *in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.* As for me, may every one say, who keeps near to God, *I shall behold thy Face in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy Likeness.*







# S E R M O N    X V .

The HAPPINESS of DRAWING NEAR  
to GOD.



PSALM lxxiii. 28.

— *It is good for me to draw near to God.*

IN a former Discourse from this  
Subject, I have,

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- I. CONSIDERED the Meaning of this *Scripture-Phrase*, and shewed wherein this great Duty of *drawing near to God* consists. I now proceed,
- II. To shew the Happiness of it; That *it is good for Me, and for Every One, to draw near to God.*

My View and Design in discoursing to  
you from this Subject, is, to recommend a  
Z Life

Life of sincere Piety, and to lead you and myself into a State of rational and delightful Communion with God. This is the very Thing which Man appears made and intended for ; and in which the chief Happiness of Man consists. So the Psalmist esteemed it, when he pronounced my Text — *It is good for me to draw near to God* ; and so it must appear to every one, who fairly attends to the Nature of this Duty.

THE Term GOOD, is indeed often used to signify *Right* or *Fit*. And in this Sense it is most true, that it is *good for Man to draw near to God*. — It is *good*, it is *right* and *fit* for every Man to do this : It is what Man was made for, and what God expects from him, as his *Duty*. But I shall not enlarge on this Sense of the Term, as the Psalmist appears to have used it here in its more *general* Sense, as denoting *Advantage* and *Happiness*. See its Connection with what preceeds, *Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish* ; thou shalt destroy them — *But it is good for me to draw near to God*. Yea, this is the Conclusion of *Asaph's* mature Thoughts. In the former Part of the *Psalms* he personates one, whose *Feet were almost gone, and his Steps*

*Steps had well nigh slipt, being envious at the Foolish, when he saw the Prosperity of the Wicked; whilst he himself laboured under great Adversity; though he had sincerely endeavoured to serve and please God. In his Distress he was first ready to conclude, that he had cleansed his Heart in vain, and washed his Hands in Innocency; and consequently, that Piety and Religion was a vain and useless Thing. But in this latter Part, he tells us, that he is now fully convinced of the contrary; that Religion is Man's highest Wisdom, Piety his chief Happiness; and a State of Friendship and Communion with God, a State of the most desirable Felicity, on this side Heaven. It is good for me to draw near to God. "My pious Labours are far from being in vain; and though Access to God will not exempt his Servants from all temporal Evils and Sorrows, yet verily there is a present peculiar Happiness and Satisfaction, attending this State, which claims my Preference, as it is the greatest attainable Good."* This, my Brethren, is what I shall now attempt to illustrate; in order to put you and myself upon *drawing*

*and keeping near to God.* In Proof of this, let it be considered,

FIRST, That if we reflect upon the *Nature* of this State of *Nearness to God*, considering wherein it consists, according to the Description before given of it, we must needs see *intuitively*, that *it is good for us to draw near to God*. The Nearness or Access of a Reasonable Creature to God, as we have considered it, is founded in an Acquaintance with God — his Being, Perfections, and Will — improved into Affections and Dispositions of Mind, corresponding to such Apprehensions — productive of Subjection of Heart and Obedience of Life to the Will and Authority of God; and in Consequence of this, our Union to God is perfected, when our Souls are resigned, and place an entire Trust and Confidence in him; in his Divine Power and Fatherly Goodness. Now, who does not see, that the chief and distinguishing Happiness of Man does, and needs must, consist in this? And that pious Persons must needs speak the Truth, when they tell us, that *it is good for them to draw near to God*? No Knowledge so good for Man, as the Knowledge of God — No Wisdom so necessary

cessary and desirable as this — No Affections and Dispositions so pleasant and delightful, as those that have God for their Object, and arise from the Contemplation of God's Excellencies and Perfections — No Subjection so rational and happy, as that which consists in Resignation and Obedience to God's Will; arising from a full Perswasion of the Equity of his Dispensations, and the Goodness of his Commands. And sure Nothing can bespeak such Composure of Soul, such internal Satisfaction, such Ease and Quiet; yea, such holy Fortitude and Joy, as when *the Heart is fixed trusting in God.*

To be further convinced of this, let us only consider, What MAN is considered in himself; and what the present State of Man, abstracted from the Consideration of the Presence and Care of God. What is he in himself, but a Being perfectly helpless? Perpetually liable to innumerable Calamities, which he can neither foresee nor prevent; secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be disappointed in every Thing he hopes for — Frequently labouring under Afflictions, he can neither redress himself; nor can he look out for any Relief, but from God

himself: And without Relief, his Life and Being, must either become extinct, or remain an insupportable Burden. This is what we are all of us liable to every Moment; having no Defence in ourselves. Now, how forlorn, precarious, and wretched, the State of every Man, who is alienated from God? Who knows not God, or however pays no proper Regard to him; who is destitute of all pious Affections and Dispositions; and who by the Course of his impious and wicked Life, makes God his Enemy, and the Thoughts of him even terrible to his Soul — Who has no Hope toward God — No Reliance upon his Protection and Care; nor any Expectations from him? I say how forlorn, precarious, and wretched, the State of every such Man; so helpless in himself, and liable to so much Misery? Whereas, *How good is it to draw nigh to God?* How happy to live under a firm Perswasion of Mind, that whilst we are so helpless in ourselves, and liable to so many Occurrences, yet we are perpetually under the Care, and interested in the Love of an Almighty Friend, who is immediately present with us, and has in his Hands the Direction of all Contingencies;



cies ; so that *not an Hair falls from our Heads without his Notice*, who has an absolute Controll over every Thing that can hurt us ; who is able and willing to support us under every Burden, and provide timely Deliverance for us : Who is able to bestow every Blessing we want, and who will make *all Things to work together for our good*?

THE *Homage* we naturally owe to such a Being, is a firm and chearful Reliance upon him ; together with every Means and Method, that has a Tendency to raise and fix our Trust in him. And certainly it follows upon this, that for us *to draw near to God*, in this Manner, must be our chief Happiness : Infomuch that I will leave it to any one to think and say, which is the most desirable State ; *To live without God in the World*, ignorant and regardless of him ; with Hearts alienated from his Love, and destitute of all Hope in God, and Expectation from him ; walking alone in this State of Darkness and Uncertainty ; struggling singly with the Sorrows and Difficulties of human Life : Or to live a Life of Faith, Hope, Trust, Friendship and Communion with God ; reaping the Benefits of every Divine

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Attribute,

Attribute, and loosing our own Insufficiency in the Fulness of infinite Perfection — I say, I will leave it to any one to think and say, which is the most desirable State; to be *far from God*, or to be *near to him*. Whether we consider Nearness to God, as an *uniform* State, consisting in an habitual, constant, Complacency in God, and Reliance upon him: Or as regarding those *instrumental* Exercises and Seasons of Devotion, whereby we feed and cherish this Frame of Mind, and in which Seasons, pious Minds feel the affectionate Workings of divine Love, Hope, Trust and Joy; doubtless it must be confessed, *it is good for us to draw near to God*.

SECONDLY, It may easily be shewn, that the *good* arising from *drawing near to God*, is the proper and peculiar Happiness of Man: His Prerogative and Portion above the Brutes. They, and even inanimate Creatures, are *essentially* as *near to God*, as any Beings are, or can be. But *spiritual* Access they are naturally incapable of; having neither *Knowledge* nor *Affections*, capable of being at all directed to God. Could we suppose rational Powers, moral Dispositions, and spiritual divine Affections, superadded to the Nature  
of

of Brutes, such as we see, and know to be in Man; this could not be without producing a visible Change in their Manner, and a sensible Change in their State and Capacity of Happiness. They would not perpetually *look downward*, as the *Poet* describes them, but they would lift up their Eyes, their Thoughts, and their Hearts to God, without whose Notice *not a Sparrow falls to the Ground*: At least all the thinking and wise Part of them would do this. We should then discover the various Kinds of Brutes at their private Devotion, and herding together for the publick Worship of God; and when *lying down in green Pastures*, or *feeding beside the still Waters*, their Meditations upon God would be sweet. In this Case, a Source of new and superior Happiness would spring up in them; and lead them from the Knowledge of God, and the Foresight of Death, to the Desires and Expectations of a Future State.

BUT alas! Inferior Creatures are naturally incapacitated for any such Happiness. They discover no Faculties for rising, and *drawing near to God*. This is the Prerogative of MAN. In other Respects, in Point  
of

of *animal* Pleasures, Man has no Prerogative above the Brutes. Were it not for our divine Powers, whereby we are capable of *drawing nigh to God*, and the sacred sublime Felicity resulting from it, the Life of the Brute, in my Apprehension, is at least as eligible as the Life of Man. And as for those of our *Species*, who are capable of *drawing nigh to God*, but do not, I cannot but judge the Life of a Brute far more eligible than theirs. The Thoughts of *God*, and Prospects of *Eternity*, if they give not Pleasure, they must give Pain and Dread. And if our divine Powers do not lead us into a State of Friendship and Communion with God, they lead us into a Wilderness of Confusion and Dissatisfaction. But here, my Brethren, is the proper, peculiar, Happiness of Man. It arises from *Nearness to God* — from an Acquaintance with him — Resignation to his Hand and Will — Subjection to his Authority — Reliance on his Care — Hope in his Mercy, and a firm joyful Trust in his All-suffering and Love. Consequently, our wisest and happiest Employment consists, in *drawing nigh to God*, in devotional Exercises, and worshipping him in *Spirit* and

and *Truth*. This is an Happiness the Brutes are Strangers to ; and the brutish Part of the World knows not of. This is the proper Work, and peculiar Happiness of Man ; the Business and Happiness of rational moral Spirits. This is the Work of Heaven, and the Happiness of Heaven ; the Essence and Comprehension of which consists in *spiritual Nearness to God*. This converts the present State into *Heaven begun*, and is the Pledge and Foretaste of Eternal Life. Every such truly pious, and righteous Person is a Child of God, and *has Eternal Life abiding in him* : Or as our Saviour expresses it, *He has in him a Well of Water springing up unto Eternal Life*.

THIRDLY, It must be good and happy to *draw near to God*, since to be alienated, and far from him, argues a State of the greatest Wretchedness and Meanness at present ; and leads on to future Misery and Destruction. What State can be more abject and forlorn in this World, than for a human Creature to live unacquainted with God ; not knowing, or not regarding his Existence : Or if he be apprehensive of his Being, yet when he *thinks on God*, *he is troubled*, having  
alienated

alienated himself by evil Works ; made God his Enemy, and the Thoughts of him dreadful. How mean and wretched his State, who has not *Hope towards God*? No Love for him, but rather an Aversion and Dread? Who restrains Prayer and Praise, and all the Exercises of Piety before him? In one Word, who *lives without God in the World*; destitute of all pious Principles, Affections, and Comforts? This is the *negative* Unhappiness of Brutes ; but it is the Sin of Ungodly Men at present ; and leads down to the Punishment and Misery of fallen Angels, and undone Spirits. The first Part of that Sentence of everlasting Doom, that shall be passed upon the Wicked is this, *Depart from me ye Cursed, Depart from God ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. Then what ungodly Sinners have made their *Choice* and their *State*, will be the *Reason, Foundation, and first Part* of their Punishment. And *Wo to them*, says God by his Prophet, *Wo also to them, when I depart. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus*

Mat. xxv.  
41.

Hof. ix.  
22.  
2 Theff. i.  
7, 8, 9.



*drawing near to God.*

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*Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. Then they shall be shut out from all the glorious external Manifestations of God and his Perfections, which they have so long disregarded; cut off from all the Communications of his Goodness, which they have abused; and shut up in Blackness and Darkeness for ever. There shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth: When the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of the Father.*

AND let it not be thought a severe or arbitrary Thing, when such impious, alienated Spirits, meet with this Doom, since it is their *own Choice*. The Enjoyment of God, and the Happiness that results from it, they have *put from them*, and rendered themselves not only *unworthy*, but *incapable* of it. It is both unfit, and in vain to indulge to them for ever the *external* Manifestations of God's Excellencies and Goodness, when they neglect and abuse these Blessings, and refuse to rise up to the Enjoyment of *God himself*. And good God! what Havock and Desolation must there be, when God is known by the Judgments that he executes? When all the  
*Wicked*

*Wicked are ſnared in the Work of their own Hands ! — When the Wicked ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God. Or as in the Verſe before my Text, Lo ! they that are far from thee ſhall periſh ; Thou ſhalt deſtroy all them that go a whoring from thee. — But it is good for me to draw near to God,*  
It follows upon this,

FOURTHLY, That to draw near to God, whilſt in this State of Diſcipline, here upon Earth, is our neceſſary and chief Preparation for the full and everlaſting Enjoyment of God in Heaven. And if ſo, certainly *it is good for me to draw nigh to God.* And, who can expect to go to the happy and everlaſting Enjoyment of God in Heaven, who has been alienated from him, all his Life long here upon Earth ? We muſt be perfect Strangers to the Nature of God, and to the Nature of Heaven — Strangers to all Divine, Spiritual, and Heavenly Happineſs, to imagine this either *fit* or *poſſible*. Social Affections and Diſpoſitions may render a Man an agreeable Member of human Society here upon Earth : But as a Man can enjoy no Divine Happineſs and Conſolations here without pious Affections, and ſpiritual Exerciſes ;

ercises ; so he appears utterly disqualified for any Lot or Portion in the Heavenly State. But if *I draw nigh to God now*—If I *walk with him* here upon Earth — If my chief Happiness *here* arises from the Enjoyment of God, and my Reliance upon him ; then the *heavenly* Life is actually begun. God is *with me*, and I *with him*. The Happiness of Heaven hereafter will not differ from this in *Kind*, so much as in *Degree*. If this be my happy Case at present, I have the *Earnest of the Heavenly Inheritance*, and taste the Fruits of the Celestial *Canaan*. I add,

FIFTHLY, The Good and Happiness arising from this *Nearness to God*, is such as will abide and support the pious divine Mind, under all worldly Sorrows and Afflictions ; yea, when all other Supports and Comforts fail — Under the Troubles of Life, and at the Hour of Death. We may all count upon it, that such Seasons will come, when *Lover and Friend shall be put far from us, and our Acquaintance into Darkness* — when *Desires shall fail*, and Life itself become a Burden — When the impious Mind shall not have *one Drop of Water to cool his Tongue*. Yea, such Seasons may come soon, return  
often,

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Eccles. xii.  
1.

Job v. 7.

John xvi.  
32.

often, and continue long. Hence the Wise Man's Advice, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.* Draw nigh to God then, whilst Young, and seek him early. Hence *Eliphaz* reminds *Job*, and let me remind you of the same, *That Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.* And what is most prudent to be done in this Case? He adds, *I would seek unto God, unto God would I commit my Cause.* It is the amiable Character and Prerogative of God, that he is a *very present Help in Trouble.* A Spirit of pious Resignation to him, will alleviate every Burden, and a firm, chearful Reliance of Mind upon his All-sufficiency and Care, is what gives Strength to the Soul, and enables *the Spirit of a Man to sustain his Infirmities.* Hence says our Saviour to his Disciples, *Behold the Hour cometh, yea, is now come, when ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.* And if God be with us, who can be against us? Or, what can separate us from the Love of God? This doubtless is a recommending Quality,

Quality, and enhances the Value of this Happiness above all other ; that it is a Cordial in Distress, a chief Good, that remains with us, when all other Good is fled and gone ; and when we most stand in Need of Relief and Comfort. It sweetens every Comfort, in Time of Prosperity — alleviates every Burden in Times of Adversity, and enables us to bear the heaviest that can befall us. I only subjoin, that it is on this very Account, that *Asaph* in my *Text*, pronounces it good to draw near to God. In this *Psalms*, he is meditating his Afflictions, and looking forward upon Death ; and from this View, declares the Advantages of Piety, and the Happiness resulting from Friendship and Communion with God. Thus in the *Verses* before my *Text*, he says, *Nevertheless, notwithstanding my Sorrows and Afflictions, O my God, I am continually with thee : Thou hast bolden me by my Right-Hand. — Thou shalt guide me by thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. — Whom have I in Heaven but thee ? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. — My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever : For lo, they*

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that

*that are far from thee shall perish — they shall sink down under their Burdens, and have no Comfort, no Helper : But it is good for me to draw near to God.*

SIXTHLY, It must appear *good for me to draw near to God*, since the greatest Displeasure that God could shew to Man, would be either to incapacitate him from this Access ; or to banish him from his Presence, and forbid his directing any Thoughts towards him, or placing any Dependance upon him. Were this the Disposition of God, all spiritual Happiness would be gone for ever, and we of *all Creatures the most miserable*. “ Shall “ I then any longer question, Whether it be “ *good for me to draw near to God*? Shall I “ ask for more Arguments, or farther Proof? “ Or shall I need Motives to apprize me of “ the Worth of my Religious, Spiritual, “ Divine Privileges, or to excite me to the “ Improvement of them, when God in his “ Divine Fatherly Goodness has endowed “ me with Natural Capacities for it, and invites me near to himself. — And to make “ the present Life easy, and train me up for “ an Establishment in his Eternal Presence “ and Happiness, has commanded me to “ *draw*



*drawing near to God.*

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“ draw near to him ; to seek his Face, and  
“ put my Trust in him — *In every State by*  
“ *Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiv-*  
“ *ing, making my Requests known unto God :*  
“ Making such Access to and Reliance up-  
“ on him, my Duty, which is in itself my  
“ chief and only sufficient Happiness; when  
“ I must have been forlorn and miserable  
“ had this been forbidden, and my Access  
“ to God prohibited.”

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Phil. iv:  
6.

AND now, my Brethren, What shall we say to these Things? And what Effect shall this *Sermon* have upon us? Will any of you act like those, to whom *Paul* and *Barnabas* preached, *Who, when they heard the Word of God, put it from them, and judged themselves unworthy of, and unconcerned about Eternal Life?* It is but too evident, that a great Part of Mankind are utterly estranged, and alienated from God. They indulge to no pious and devotional Methods, necessary to their Access to him, and assuring of their Hearts before him: They even say to the Almighty, depart from us; for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what Profit shall we have, if we pray unto him? It is to be feared,

Acts xiii:  
46.

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that this is the present Case with *some* of you ; and if so, let me tell you, that if you continue in this State, you are undone for ever. If you in Effect make Distance and Alienation from God, your *Choice*, What can remain for you, but to *be banished for ever from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*. Though this is a Practice you stupidly follow, yet it is a Thought no Man can bear. O ! *Seek ye the Lord then, whilst he may be found, call ye upon him whilst he is near*. Resolve upon a Course of Piety and Virtue, and daily pursue it with Constancy and Perseverance. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*.

AND let none of us think, that we have already attained the nearest and most perfect Access to God. There is still, and will ever be Room to draw *nearer and nearer*, whilst on this Side Heaven : Yea, and in Heaven too, I make no Doubt ; and that through eternal Ages. We have not by *searching found out God ; we have not found out the Almighty unto Perfection*. We may, by pious Meditations on the Excellencies of the  
Divine

Divine Nature, and by devoutly worshipping before him in *Spirit* and in *Truth*, not only *retain God in our Knowledge*; but we may be constantly improving our Conceptions, heightening our pleasing Apprehensions, encreasing our delightful Affections, strengthening our Trust, and enlarging our Divine Joy. “O my Soul! *Wait*  
 “*then upon God, for my Expectations are*  
 “*from him. With my whole Heart will I*  
 “*seek him* — I will labour to draw nearer  
 “and nearer. — In every Access, and devo-  
 “tional Duty, I will *stir up all that is within*  
 “*me.* I would enure myself to walk with  
 “God, steadily, uniformly, circumspectly,  
 “*acknowledging him in all my Ways.* The  
 “*Life I live, shall be a Life of Faith in God;*  
 “serving him faithfully, and confiding in  
 “him entirely — having my *Heart fixed,*  
 “*trusting in God.* It is good for me to draw  
 “*near to God, with a pure Heart, in full*  
 “*Affurance of Faith;* the nearer the better;  
 “and it will be best of all, when I get near-  
 “est of all — to *see him as he is seen, to know*  
 “*him as he is known,* and to enjoy him  
 “as he is enjoyed, by the most pure, pious,

“ and perfected Spirits. In his Presence there  
 “ is Fulness of Joy, and at his Right-Hand  
 “ are Pleasures for ever. O my God, thou  
 “ shalt guide me by thy Counsel, and afterwards  
 “ receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Hea-  
 “ ven but thee? And there is none upon Earth,  
 “ that I desire besides thee: My Flesh and my  
 “ Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of  
 “ my Soul, and my Portion for ever.”





## S E R M O N XVI.

The GRADUAL WORKINGS and  
PRODUCT of AFFLICTIONS.



ROM. v. 3, 4, 5.

*And not only so, but we glory in Tribulations  
also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Pa-  
tience — and Patience Experience — and  
Experience Hope : And Hope maketh not  
ashamed ; because the Love of God is shed  
abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost,  
which is given unto us.*

**I**N my Text and Context the Apo-  
stle Paul recommends the Chri-  
stian Religion, on Account of  
three great and most important  
Advantages.

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I. IT ascertains to us a free and full Par-  
don of all past Sins ; brings us into a State

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of

of Peace and Reconciliation with God ; and makes us easy and happy in our own Minds. Ver. 1. *Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God by our Lord Jesus Christ:*

II. It raises us to the lively Hope of a future and better State ; and enables us at present in View of it, to *rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* Ver. 2. *By whom also we have Access by Faith into this Grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.* Nor is this all ; but as our Apostle adds, in the Passage I now single out for the Subject of our present Thoughts,

III. *AND not only so, but we glory in Tribulation also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience — and Patience Experience — and Experience Hope : And Hope maketh not ashamed ; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*

THESE are *three* of the great Advantages of our holy Religion. It is the *third* only that I shall consider at present. The Gospel of Christ is not intended to exempt us from the Sorrows and Afflictions *common to*  
Man



*Man* in the present Life; but it does more for us than this; it teaches and enables us to bear them with Fortitude and Patience; to improve them to our best Advantage, and make them *all work together for our good*. And though in some Cases, our steady Adherence to Truth and Righteousness, may draw upon us Abuse and Persecution, yet instead of being discouraged or dejected, it enables us to *glory in Tribulations*, knowing the Train of those happy Consequences that follow upon them, which are numbered up in our *Text*. The Wisdom and Rectitude of Divine Providence, and the Advantages of temporal Afflictions, may be argued from other Topicks; but at present, let us confine our Thoughts to what the Apostle here sets before us; and consider the several Particulars in the natural Order, in which he has placed them.

1<sup>st</sup>, TRIBULATION is the *first* natural Product of Afflictions. *Afflictions* and *Tribulations*, though in near Connection, as *Cause* and *Effect*, yet they are no more the same Thing, than the *outward* Instrument that occasioneth Pain, and the *inward* Pain itself. Tribulation is that *inward Sensation*

of

of the *Mind*, that is occasioned by *outward Afflictions*, when the Heart or Mind is affected with deep Concern. *Affliction* is the Impression, or Striking, of *external Things*, the Effect of which produced in the *Body*, we call *Pain*: But when it reaches to the *Mind*, it is properly called *Tribulation* \*. When *Tribulation* arises from the Afflictions of *Others*, it is that *Sympathy* and affectionate *Tenderness*, and *Sorrow of Mind*, whereby we feel for our *Fellow-Creatures* and *Friends*; share with them under their *Troubles*, and lament the *Loss* of them, when they are dead. And *Tribulation*, when felt on *our own Account*, is that Impression, which our own bodily *Pains* and *Afflictions* make upon our own *Minds*. It is a Temper the direct reverse to *Hard-heartedness*, and to that unnatural *Insensibility*, which the *Stoick Philosophers* in vain attempted, and proudly boasted of, but always failed them under severe *Trials*. *No Affliction* in its own Nature is indifferent; much less is it *joyous*, but *grievous* for the present, whatever good Effects it may afterwards produce. This our Religion justly allows, *Heb. xii. 11.*

No

\* θλίψις from θλιβω.

No Affliction therefore is desirable for its own Sake ; but should patiently be submitted to, on Account of its advantageous Tendency and Consequences. We imperfect Creatures, stand in Need of Sorrows and Affliction ; the sole Reason why the God of Goodness and Mercy has introduced them, and made them a Part of his providential Discipline ; *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men : But though he cause Grief, yet will he have Compassion, according to the Multitude of his Mercies.* Thus *Tribulation is mental Concern.* But whether it be virtuous or vicious, pious or impious, depends upon the Causes from which it proceeds, and the Effects it produceth. In itself, it is neither the one nor the other.

Lam. iii.  
32, 33.

2dly, PATIENCE is the proper Effect and *First-fruit of Tribulation.* *Tribulation worketh Patience.* Not that *Patience* is its constant and necessary Product ; but what it ought, and is intended to produce ; though too often it produceth *Impatience.* Afflictions, if not attended to, and seriously regarded, stand for Nothing ; but only shew an unnatural, stupid, insensible, or hardened Frame of Spirit ; which is too common in  
our

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Jer. ii. 30.

our World. Speaking of such says the Prophet in the Name of God, *In vain have I smitten your Children; they receive no Correction.* Others, instead of being suitably humbled and affected under Afflictions, are exasperated with Rage and Passion. The same Prophet compares these to *a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke.*

Jer. iii. 30.

SOME possibly may think, that the Way to Patience is, to cast off all Concern about our own, or other Persons Afflictions, and stifle the natural Passions and Affections; but this is both unnatural, and impossible. This is not enuring themselves to bear the Burdens of Life; but endeavouring to bear Nothing at all. The Consequence of which is this, that when heavy Afflictions come upon them, and touch them in some tender Part, they grow furious and desperate. They, who have studied this unnatural Art in a philosophical Manner, and boasted of their high Attainments, (ashamed to confess and discover their *Weakness*, as they call it) They have often either laid violent Hands upon themselves; or they have sunk down into absolute Distress. But *Tribulation*, when allowed

allowed to produce its proper Fruit, *works Patience.*

PATIENCE, pious Patience, imports that Strength and Constancy of Mind, which enables the *Spirit of a Man* to sustain under the Weight of Sorrows, and the Pressure of those Afflictions, which the Providence of God lays upon him; and this without sinking into Despondency, deserting his Duty, or murmuring against God.

THE *first* Province of *Patience* is to keep and preserve the Mind firm and composed. On this our Saviour's Direction is grounded, *In your Patience possess ye your Souls.* Its next happy Effect is to prevent Despondency, and Distrust of God and his Providence; as if he were either unable, or unwilling, to appear for our Help and Deliverance. You may read the first Workings of Impatience, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his Mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his Promise fail for evermore? Hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercies?* Pious Patience checks the first Workings of this unhappy Spirit; as in the Words following, *And I said, this is my Infirmary; but I will remember the Years of the*  
*most*

Luke xxi.  
19.

Psalms  
lxxvii.  
7, 8, 9.



*most High. I will remember the Works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy Wonders of old: I will meditate also of all thy Works, and talk of thy Doings. This is the Spirit and Language of pious Patience, "What, shall I receive Good at the Hand of the Lord, and shall not I also receive Evil? It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him; who will not suffer me to be tried above my Ability, but in this, and every Trial will find a Way for my Escape, that I may be able to bear it."*

CONSEQUENT upon this, *Patience* and *Constancy* of Mind prevents our yielding to the Power of any Temptation, in order to get free from present Troubles; and renders us steady and persevering in our Adherence to God and our Duty. *The trying of your Faith*, says the Apostle, *worketh Patience — And let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Such is the Nature and Province of *Patience*.

IT farther remains here, that we consider, *HOW Tribulation worketh Patience*; or the Connection



Connection between these two Tempers, as Cause and Effect. My Text says, *We know it — Knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience.* Paul knew it from Experience; and so do all those, *who have come out of great Tribulation*, and have been found faithful. *Tribulation* is the Discipline and Preparation of the Mind for the Reception of *Patience*. The Man, who has met with few Afflictions and Trials, must as yet, be a Stranger to this Virtue. It is possible, he may be easy and good humoured, whilst he has Nothing to ruffle or discompose his Temper; but when Troubles and Provocations come upon him, they will find him unprepared for bearing them with Patience and Submission to the Will of God. His Mind at first will be found as weak, and perhaps as peevish, fretful, and dejected, as the Mind of a *Child*, who knows little or Nothing, what *Patience* means. A long Series of uninterrupted Ease, and Indulgence, softens the Mind, enervates the Spirit, and leaves it an easy Prey to approaching Distress. Sooner or later Sorrows and Sufferings will come, and Death itself; and the longer any Man has been exempt from the Discipline of Afflictions,

tions, the less able will he be found to bear them, when they come.

BUT *Afflictions*, you will say, and the Prospects of approaching *Death*, are so terrible and disheartening, that they intimidate the Soul, instead of tending to beget Fortitude and Patience — You may as well imagine, that the Sight of Battles and Bloodshed, and the Marks of former Wounds, intimidate the veteran Soldier, and inspire him with Cowardice. Experience, you know, proves the Contrary. The first Action, and the first Alarm, chill the Blood, and intimidate the Heart ; but when it has recovered from this, it gains new Strength, unknown before. This is the Spirit of *Patience*, and of *Fortitude* — This gives the virtuous Firmness to the Heart of Man, which is nowhere to be learnt, nowhere to be purchased, but in the School of Affliction and Tribulation. — It follows upon this, That God in his Providence deals with his Righteous Servants, not more severely, as we are ready to think ; but more kindly, and even more tenderly, when he forms and disciplines them with Afflictions, from their *Youth up*. He hardens them with Duty and Service ;  
with

with Pains and Labours, as a good General does his Soldiers; that being thus trained and disciplined for the Warfare of Life; and inspired with Vigour from above, they grow *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might, and endure Hardships, as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*; neither intimidated with Terrors, nor seduced with flattering or insinuating Temptations; but with pious Patience and divine Fortitude, they daily live in Expectation of Death without Fear; meet it when it comes, without Terror, and yield to it without Reluctance. Happy Case! when *Tribulation thus worketh Patience*. A present Possession this, of more Worth than all the World besides. If you do not readily assent to all this, you either never knew, or you have forgotten the Exhortation which *speaketh unto you as unto Children, My Son, despise not thou the Chastning of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure Chastning, God dealeth with you as with Sons: For what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? — Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our Flesh, which corrected us, and we*

Heb. xiii.  
5—11.

*gave them Reverence : Shall we not much rather be in Subjection unto the Father of our Spirits and live? For they verily chastened us after their own Pleasure ; but be for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness. Now no Chastning for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them, which are exercised thereby. Thus Tribulation worketh Patience.*

3dly, PATIENCE worketh Experience. *We glory in Tribulation, knowing, that Tribulation worketh Patience—and Patience Experience.* The Intention of this Phrase, as it appeared to our Translators, is in itself no bad one ; though, I apprehend, not the precise Thought which the Apostle had in his Mind, as I shall shew presently. But it may be of Use to consider first, the Sense of this Phrase as it stands in our Translation ; *And Patience worketh Experience.* It does so. If you ask, What Experience? I answer, It works out for us, and in us, experimental Evidence and Proof of the All-sufficiency and Faithfulness of God ; and gives us Experience of the Supports and Consolations of his Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Because the Love

*Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, as in the Close of the Text. I tell you the Truth, says our Saviour to his Disciples; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. So may I say, it is expedient for you to be afflicted, in order to learn Patience; and in Consequence, Experience; for without this you can never know, what Supports and Consolations God has prepared for them that love him — for them that submit patiently under his mighty Hand, and hope, and wait for his Salvation. You may hear of this by the Hearing of the Ear; but now you will experience it: And whilst Patience is thus working Experience, Experience in Return will work Patience, and lay a Foundation in the Soul for farther Patience under future Trials. Be patient, therefore Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord (wait patiently till God appear for your Help and Deliverance) Behold the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive the early and latter Rain. Be ye also patient,*

James vi  
7—10.



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XVI.

2 Cor. i.  
8, 9, 10.

*stablish your Hearts; for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Take, my Brethren, the Prophets, for an Example of suffering Affliction, and of Patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the Patience of Job, and have seen the End of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender Mercy. The History and Experience of God's suffering Servants, both in our own and in former Days, tends to inspire us with Hope under like Circumstances; but more especially the Experience, which We Ourselves have had of the Mercy and All-sufficiency of God. Thus argues the Apostle Paul, We would not, Brethren, have you ignorant of our Trouble, which came to us in Asia; that we were pressed out of Measure, above Strength, insomuch that we despaired even of Life: But we had the Sentence of Death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the Dead; who delivered us from so great a Death, and doth deliver; in whom also we trust, that he will yet deliver. Thus Tribulation worketh Patience — and Patience Experience — and Experience Hope.*

BUT



BUT as I intimated before, the Word *Experience*, in our Translation, does not convey to an English Reader the full and precise Meaning of the Original. The Greek Word, which our Apostle uses, signifies not *Experience*, but *Proof* \* — and the Verb † it is derived from, signifies to prove, or try the Nature and Qualities of a Subject; as when any Metal, such as Gold or Silver, is *tried in the Fire*, or by the *Touchstone*. That which bears the Test is Proof. *I will bring the third Part through the Fire, and will refine them as Silver is refined, and will try them as Gold is tried.* Thus says Job under his heavy Sufferings, *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold.* Thus the Apostle James understands, and paraphrases my Text, *My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the Trying of your Faith worketh Patience: But let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting Nothing.* Afflictions are the proper Test of the real Virtue and Piety of Man. *Tribulation worketh Patience; and Patience Proof.*

Zech. xiii.  
9.

Job xxiii.  
10.

James i.  
2, 3, 4.

B b 3

Two

\* δοκιμή.

† δοκιμαζω.

SERMON  
XVI.

Two Things are here implied. One is, that Afflictions have a *natural Tendency* to beget Virtue and Piety in the Minds of Men. The Other is, that Afflictions are the *Test* of a Man's real Character; whether he is a truly Good Man, or not — and likewise, what are the *Degrees* of his Virtue and Piety. The World can come at no certain Knowledge of a good Man's Character and Principles any other Way; nor without such *Trials* can a good Man know *himself*. On this Truth is built that Part of our Saviour's *Parable of the Sower*; *Some hear the Word, and anon with Joy receive it; but having no Root in themselves, they endure only for a While; for when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth, because of the Word, by and by they are offended.*

Mat. xiii.  
20, 21.

The whole Book of *Job* is formed upon this *Plan*, that Afflictions are the *Test* and *Proof* of Virtue and Piety; and for this very Reason it is, that the best and dearest Servants of God, are exercised with the greatest and forest Afflictions. That *Charity* indeed, which *believeth all Things, and hopeth all Things*, will look upon such a Person, as *Job* approved himself in his Prosperity, as a  
*perfect*

*perfect and upright Man, one who feareth God, and escheweth Evil. But devilish Envy and Censure will suspect, and say, Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast not thou made an Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every Side. Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Earth: But put forth thine Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face. True, upon Trial it proved otherwise with Job; and he came forth as Gold. But this shews, that there is no knowing what any Man is, till he is tried. It is Patience that produceth Proof. Pious Submission of Heart and Soul to the Hand and Will of God under such Afflictions, attended with a persevering Continuance in Well-doing, it is This, and This only, that compleats the Evidence and Proof of the good Man.*

THIS deserves a more particular Consideration. The real Worth and Excellency of a good Man, consists in *two Things* — his VIRTUE and his PIETY. Both these are *proved* by his Afflictions, and are found to his Praise, and Honour, and Glory, when Patience has its perfect Work.

FIRST, His VIRTUE. By which I mean the Strength and Constancy of his good Principles, and of his good Heart : Or his steady and obstinate Adherence to his Duty, and to what he knows to be True and Right. When the *present* Practice of Righteousness is consistent with, and conducive to a Man's *worldly Interest*, as it generally is in Prosperity, then the Man has little or no Temptation to Unrighteousness. In this State, it is hard to know *what Spirit we are of* ; whether *Self-Love*, or the *Love of the World*, sways us to act right : Or whether it be a steady *Principle* of true *Virtue* ruling in the Heart, and determining us to pursue Righteousness for its *own Sake*. But when *Tribulation* and *Sufferings* come upon us, and we can no longer adhere to *Truth* and *Righteousness* without Suffering for it ; when we must either renounce our *Duty*, or our *worldly Interest* ; or when we cannot get an honest Livelihood without submitting to great Pains and severe Hardships, *then* is our *Virtue* tried indeed ; and if steadfastly adhered to, and persisted in, it not only gives *internal* Satisfaction to the *Virtuous Mind* itself, but it gains the Esteem, Admiration,

and

and Applause of *Others*. Here is *Virtue* presented to our View, when we behold the *Man*, whom neither Poverty, nor Bonds, nor Death can affright; nor Pleasure, Riches, or Honours, seduce from Truth and Right \*. Thus is our *Virtue*, proved and displayed by *Patience* and *Constancy* under severe Trials; and the Piety of our Hearts, when we feel this proceeding from an *inward, settled* Principle of Trust in God, and Submission to his Will. Which leads me to observe,

SECONDLY, Our PIETY, and Regard to God is proved by the same Method. It is very possible, and probably no uncommon Case, for a Man to be regular and cordial too, in his Devotions, both publick and private; and pass for an eminently pious and devout Man, in the Apprehension, both of himself and of others; who upon Trial is found to have little or nothing of true *Piety* in his Heart and Mind; but is really that  
very

\* Quem neque Pauperies, neque Mors, neque Vincula terrent :

Responsare Cupidinibus, contemnere Honores —  
Fortis.

Hor. Sat. L. 2. l. 84, 85.



very Man, *Satan* is represented as suspecting *Job* to be. And indeed these Cases upon Trial are found so *common*, that all human Piety is brought under Suspicion. Many Persons believing the Being and Providence of God, presiding over the World, and extending to all human Affairs; they make a Practice of praying to God very devoutly, and very sincerely, to preserve their Lives and their Health — to guard them from unseen Accidents and Dangers — to preserve them from Losses, Diseases and Death — to bless them in their *Basket and in their Store* — to *set an Hedge about them, and about all that they have on every Side*: and whilst all goes on, and answers to their *Wish and Prayer*, they are likewise sincerely devout in their Returns of *Praise and Thanks* to God. But, if the Providence of God do not go on in the same Course, to favour them according to their *worldly Inclination and Wish*; and secure to them those *temporal Pleasures and Comforts* which their Hearts are set upon, — If, as it is expressed in the Book of *Job*, *God put forth his Hand, and touch all that they have; they will curse him to his Face*. If they meet with worldly Losses and Disappointments



pointments — If their dear Relations are afflicted, or die — If their Circumstances are reduced, or their Health impaired; and especially if God *touch them in their Bone and in their Flesh*; and lay Afflictions upon their Loins, and Sorrow upon their Hearts, then they cry out against God, as no God of theirs; saying, *Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways: What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And What Profit should we have, if we pray unto him?*

Job xxi.  
14, 15.

BUT if the good Man, like *Job*, still retain his *Integrity* and *Piety*; if he submit himself and rest satisfied with the Disposals of God, and the Dispensations of his Providence, leaving to God the Government of the World; fully perswaded both of his Wisdom and Goodness, saying, *It is, the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good — The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his Name — What, shall we receive good at the Hand of the Lord? And shall we not also receive Evil? If he can resolve his own Will into the Will of God, still praying to him, and praising him; saying farther, Though he slay me I will trust in him;*

Job i.  
21.

Job xiii.  
15.

him; It is This — it is This my Friends, that shews the Truth of our Religion, and the Perfection of our Piety: Not only that we have conceived right *Sentiments* of God and his Providence; but that our *Hearts* are right with him. It was thus that the Faith and Piety of *Abraham*, of *Job*, of *Daniel*, was tried and displayed; and of all the eminently pious and worthy Persons, that have dwelt in this World. Such Trials as these, leave no Doubt concerning the Purity and Perfection of *Virtue* and *Piety*. They discover the *inward Disposition* of the good Man's *Soul*, and the *latent Principles* of his *Heart*; how he stands affected towards *God* and *Goodness*; and consequently, what his true Character, and what the *Man* really is — Whether mere *Humour*, or *Hypocrisy*, or *Self-Love*, or the *Love of the World*; or the *Love of Virtue*, and of *God*, have the Rule and Government in his Heart. All this is discovered, whilst *Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Proof*. This forced from the *Roman Officer*, and them that were with him, that Testimony to our Saviour's Character, when they beheld the *Patience* and *Piety*, with which he endured the Cross, despising

*spising the Shame, Truly this Man was a Son of God.*

SERMON  
XVI.

Matt.  
xxvii. 54.

I ONLY add, that as these Trials prove, display, and perfect Virtue and Piety, *where it is* ; so they help to form it, *where it is not*. They help to subdue, humble, and calm the Soul — They abate our Fondness for earthly Things — They contract the Sphere of our Desires and Happiness — and at last enable us to be happy in the sole Enjoyment of God, and of our own Souls. They give that Strength and Firmness to the Soul, that in Time enables us to do and suffer what before we could not ; and instead of repining or succumbing under worldly Losses, Sorrows, and Disappointments, they raise up the Soul to God and Heaven, and enable us even to *glory in Tribulation also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience worketh experimental Proof*. This one comprehensive Virtue of approved pious *Patience*, is a *present* Possession of more Importance to a Man's Happiness, than all the Treasures in the World.

BUT all does not end here — It follows, *and Experience, or Proof, worketh Hope — such Hope, as maketh not ashamed ; because the*  
Love

SERMON  
XVI.

*Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us. This I must reserve as the Subject of another Discourse. What has been said, I hope will abate your Dread, and Aversion to the Thoughts of Afflictions; and help to reconcile you to the Providence and Government of God—Yea, to make you even in love with such Discipline, as your Heavenly Father sees good to appoint. In what farther remains, I shall hope to raise in you something of that noble Spirit, which the Apostle James recommends, in that Passage which I have before cited, and with which I shall now conclude; My Brethren, count it all Joy, instead of being dismayed, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Trials; knowing that the trying of your Faith worketh Patience—But let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James i.  
2, 3, 4.

L O R D,

**L**ORD, I have found 'tis good for me  
To bear my Father's Rod :  
Afflictions make me learn thy Law,  
And live upon my God.

SERMON  
XVI.

This is the Comfort I enjoy,  
When new Distress begins,  
I read thy Word, I run thy Way,  
And hate my former Sins.

Had not thy Word been my Delight,  
When earthly Joys were fled,  
My Soul oppress'd with Sorrows Weight,  
Had sunk among the Dead.

I know thy Judgments, Lord, are right,  
Tho' they may seem severe ;  
The sharpest Sufferings I endure,  
Flow from thy faithful Care.

S E R-



## S E R M O N XVII.

The GRADUAL WORKINGS and  
PRODUCT OF AFFLICTIONS.



ROM. v. 3, 4, 5.

*And not only so, but we glory in Tribulations also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience — and Patience Experience — and Experience Hope : And Hope maketh not ashamed ; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

SERMON  
XVII.



THE Life of Man here upon Earth, is made up of a Mixture of Prosperity and Adversity ; Health and Sickness ; Pleasure and Pain ; Joy and Sorrow. This Constitution is the Work of God : It is *he that bath set the One over against the Other.* The various Seasons  
of



of the Year, and the Revolutions of Darkness and Light, are not more certain, than the Changes in the State and Life of Man: To some they return at one Time and in one Proportion, and to others, in another; but all this pursuant to the Appointment, and under the Cognizance and Direction of God; who knows what Sort of Discipline, and what Dispensations are fittest and best for us, infinitely better than we know ourselves. Now, as so great a Part of our Lives is made up of Sorrow and Sufferings, it concerns each of us to employ a proportionable Share of our serious Thoughts on this Subject; that we may know both how to bear, and how to improve these Dispensations to our best Interest, agreeably to the Will and Intention of God. This, I judge, makes it the Duty and Business of the Ministers of the Gospel, to employ a large Share, if not the greater Part, of their Time and Pains, in labouring to promote in the Souls of Men the *passive* Virtues of Meekness, Patience, Fortitude, and Resignation; contributing at the same Time to their spiritual Comfort, Faith, and Joy.

OUR *Virtue* and *Piety* in the present State is formed and tried *two* Ways, One is by entrusting with us the agreeable Talents of Health and Strength, Riches and Station, together with such like Abilities for serving our Generation according to the Will of God, in an *active* Capacity. The Other is, by exercising us with Pains and Sorrows, Wants and Afflictions, which frequently render us incapable of any considerable *active* Service. The *Former* is to us the more agreeable and more eligible Method of Trial and Discipline; but it does not follow, that it is the more safe and conducive to our best Interest. Indeed, when Persons who live in Ease and Affluence are truly virtuous and pious, faithfully employing the Talents they are entrusted with, and serving God with becoming Gratitude and Humility, this shews an excellent Character, and argues the truest *Virtue* and *Piety*; but not *superior* to that which is learnt and exercised in the School of Affliction. Witness the Case of *Job*, who in the Days of his Prosperity was *just*, and *charitable*, and *compassionate*. See Chap. xxix. 11—17. But still, in his Adversity, his *Virtue* and *Piety* were improved and displayed

played in a more conspicuous and eminent Manner.

WE often talk indeed of our *active Service*, and speak of our *serving God*; whereas we are incapable of *being serviceable to God, as a Man may be to his Friend*. All our Piety and Service in the Sight of God is only our exhibiting such Tempers and Actions, as are *right* in themselves, becoming our Condition, and consequently pleasing to God. This is what we may do in Adversity, as well as in Prosperity. Yea, the Sorrows and Afflictions, with which God is pleased to exercise us, have a most friendly Tendency to promote in us such Tempers, and such Actions. Frequent Thoughts therefore, and suitable Discourses on this Subject of Afflictions, must contribute to the Promotion, both of our Holiness, and of our Comfort. I therefore beg Leave to go on with this Subject, from which I have discoursed to you before; *We glory in Tribulations also*—We are so far from being dejected under, or ashamed of the Sorrows and Sufferings that are allotted to us, that we even *glory in Tribulations; knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience*

*Experience, and Experience Hope ; and Hope maketh not ashamed ; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us.*

THE first natural Effect of external Afflictions and Sufferings, is the begetting of *Tribulation* ; which signifies an inward Impression and Concern of Mind. This Concern has a Tendency to work *Patience* ; or a pious Submission to the whole Will and Providence of God ; or virtuous Fortitude in *bearing* what he appoints, and Constancy in *doing* what he requires, not daunted by Terrors, nor seduced by Temptations. And such *Patience* produceth *Experimental Proof*. This forms his Character, and shews what the Man is, to the Satisfaction of Himself, and of the World around him.

5thly, WE come to consider the *last* Effect mentioned in our *Text*, *And Hope maketh not ashamed*. The Reason follows ; *Because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us*. Here,

FIRST, Let us consider the *Assertion* itself ; *And Hope maketh not ashamed* ; meaning the *Hope* before mentioned ; the *Hope*  
that

that springs from tried Virtue, and approved Fidelity. In this *Phrase*, or Manner of Speech, more is intended, than what is expressed. *Hope* is so far from *making us ashamed*, that it *prevents our being ashamed*, or dejected under our Afflictions: On the contrary, it inspires us with Courage and Comfort; *because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts*. Thus it stands connected with the first Clause in my Text; *And not only so, but we also glory in Tribulation* — We are so far from being *ashamed* of our Sorrows and Sufferings, that we rather *glory* in them; that God is pleased to call us out to the most difficult Services; even to suffer for his Cause, in order to display his Glory, and shew forth the Power of true Religion.

THE Passage now under Consideration, is grounded upon this, That the *Men of this World*, who are Strangers to the true Spirit of Piety and Religion, are frequently dejected, and ashamed of the Afflictions and Troubles they meet with. One Reason of which, is This; because *Others* are too apt to be ashamed of them, and treat them with Contempt. This is often the Case with Persons, who labour under bodily Weakness or



Deformity, Pains or Afflictions; who meet with great Losses, or heavy Calamities — who labour under Want and Poverty; as well as those who meet with Abuse and Persecution, Scandal and Disgrace. Such Persons are too apt to be *ashamed of themselves*; and the *World* to be ashamed of them. They not only think themselves mean and contemptible on this Account, but they are ready to look upon themselves as deserted of God; and interpret these Afflictions as the Tokens of God's Displeasure; or at least as the Proofs of his bearing less Regard for them, than for others. This was the Treatment our Saviour himself met with, and this the Interpretation the World put upon his Sufferings and low Estate. The Men of the World concluded, *that God had forsaken him*, or never had any Regard for him. The like Treatment many a good Man has met with. But, my Brethren, *Hope maketh not ashamed* — Such *Hope* as my Text speaks of, arising from tried Virtue, and approved Fidelity, supported by the Power and Principles of true Religion. This sustained the Mind of our Saviour, *the Captain of our Salvation*, who was a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted*



*quainted with Grief: But being animated with this Patience and with this Hope, he endured the Cross and* DESPISED THE SHAME.

Heb. ii.  
12.

It was this *Hope* likewise, that sustained the Soul of pious *Job*, when stript of all his worldly Comforts — when covered over with the most painful and loathsome Disease — when on this Account he was censured by his Friends, and represented as a Man abandoned and cursed of God; his Hope in God was his only Support. *Though he slay me,* says he, *yet will I trust in him.* I only refer you farther to the *Psalmist's* Case. *Mine Enemies,* says he, *speak against me, and they that lay wait for my Soul take Counsel together; saying, God hath forsaken him; persecute, and take him, for there is none to deliver.* Animated with this *Hope*, he adds, *O God, be not far from me; O my God, make hast for my Help. For I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.*

Job xiii.  
15.

Psal. lxxi.  
10.

Ver. 14.

INDEED, if our Afflictions are the *natural* Fruit and Consequence of *our own Sins and Follies*, we have no Reason to glory in them; but great Reason to take Shame and Sorrow to ourselves: But if they are brought upon us in the Course of God's Providence, we

need not, we ought not, to be ashamed, And if we suffer for *Conscience and Righteousness Sake*, we have still greater Reason for Comfort and Joy. In Proof of this, let me refer you to two Passages of Scripture ; one is, 1 *Pct.* ii. 19. *For this is Thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience towards God, endure Grief, suffering wrongfully. For what Glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye take it patiently? But, if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* The other is, *Mat.* v. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake: Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.*

THERE is not indeed the same Reason for Joy and Glory, when we suffer only the common *Afflictions* of Life, as when we suffer *Persecution for Righteousness Sake* : But there is no more Reason to be *ashamed* or *discouraged* in one Case, more than the other. And whenever the common *Afflictions* of Life  
produce

produce in us their proper Fruits ; and *Patience has its perfect Work* ; when upon such Trials we are found perfect and entire, wanting nothing ; then there is just Ground for Praise, and Honour, and Glory ; and it will be found so, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. i. 7.

Now, as in all such Cases, there is no just Reason for Shame and Dejection ; so, wherever there is that Hope, which we are now considering, there will be a Freedom from Shame and Dejection ; and the Soul will be animated with Comfort and Joy. When the good Man has this Trial of himself, of his Virtue and Piety, his Fortitude and Constancy — When he has this Witness in himself, and feels the lively Workings of Hope in God, as his Friend — his All-suffering Friend, whose Dealings with him are all in very Mercy and Faithfulness ; when this is the happy Case, it must make him not ashamed — it must cause him to rejoice in God, and joy in him as his Salvation. Thus Hope in God is the good Man's Preservative against Shame, as well as Fear. Such is the Uncertainty, and such the Mutability of Human Life, that Happiness has much to fear, and Misery has much to hope for ; whilst Virtue and Piety

Piety has always a Refuge and Resource in God and Providence, which not only improves the Blessings, but mitigates the Evils of Human Life. All this will farther appear, as we go on to consider,

SECONDLY, *The Cause and Reason of this, assigned in our Text. Because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* This the *Apostle* represents as the happy Case with all perfect and complete Christians, who are perfect and entire, wanting nothing: In whom the Christian Religion has produced all its proper and genuine Fruits and Effects. *They have the Love of God shed abroad in their Hearts.* Thus in the *Verses* before my Text. *Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have Access by Faith into this Grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.* This Hope enables us to glory in Tribulation also; and prevents our being dismayed or ashamed; *because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* Hence the *Apostle's Prayer* for the Christians at *Ephesus*, *For this Cause I bow my*

*my Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man; that Christ may dwell in your Hearts by Faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in Love, may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height; and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the Fulness of God. O glorious Privilege! O happy State! This is what our blessed Religion is intended to effect for us: And till it has effected this, we are but imperfect Christians; but Babes in Christ. The Christian Dispensation, is a Dispensation of Grace and Love; of Faith and Hope; of Joy and Comfort. It represents God to us under the amiable Character of the God of Love, and Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort and Consolation; who is not only disposed freely to pardon and forgive all our past Sins, and to compassionate all our Weaknesses and Imperfections; but it leads us to see, that all his Commands, as well as Promises, are given for our Advantage; and all his providential Dealings with us, even the*



the most painful and grievous, are in very Mercy and Faithfulness; and shall all be made *to work together for our good*. This is the *Genius and Spirit* of the *Gospel*; which, if it really enter into our *Spirits*, and take full Possession of our *Hearts*, must needs inspire us with sacred Courage and lively Hopes under all our Tribulations,

BUT then, as my *Text* expresses it, *the Love of God must be shed abroad in our Hearts*. We must not only have some faint and *speculative* Notions of the Love of God, but our Minds must conceive the most friendly Sentiments of God, and his Providence; and our Hearts must feel, and relish the full Sense of his Love and Care; rendering us submissive to his whole Will — resigned to his Disposal — satisfied with his Appointments — chearfully willing to do, and suffer, whatever he assigns to us; persuaded that God knows what is fittest and best for us. Now, when the *Love of God is thus shed abroad in our Hearts*, then is his *Holy Spirit imparted and given to us*; as the *Apostle* expresses it, *to such God has not given the Spirit of Fear; but of Power, and of Love, and of a sound Mind*. He that thus dwelleth



*dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Now when this is the happy Case, the suffering or sorrowful Christian, must be animated with *Hope* — with *lively Hope* — with the *best Hopes* and the *best Comforts*. And let me tell you, there is nothing but This, that can give us true Comfort under our Tribulations. However the Men of this World may amuse and pleasure themselves, in Time of Health and Prosperity, yet in Times of Sorrow and Affliction, there is nothing that can be the Strength and Comfort of our Souls ; nothing but *Hope in God*, arising from *the Love of God shed abroad in our Hearts*, by his Holy Spirit imparted to us. In such Seasons of Tribulation, the Language of every pious and happy Soul is this, *Lord, whom have I in Heaven but thee ? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee ; My Flesh and my Heart fails ; but thou art the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever. Why art thou cast down, O my Soul ? And why art thou disquieted within me ? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him.*

I HAVE thus gone through this instructive Subject. *And not only so, but we glory also in Tribulation, knowing that Tribulation worketh*  
*Patience,*

*Patience, and Patience Experience, or experimental Proof — and Experience, or Proof, worketh Hope — and Hope maketh not ashamed; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us.*

IT now remains, that I point out the Use and Improvement, that we should make of these Instructions. And here my *Text* itself may serve for our further Guide; Where we are taught, what Apprehensions good Christians should form of such afflictive Providences, as are from Time to Time severally allotted to them; and how they should stand affected towards them. It is well known, that too many of us, are apt to be ashamed and dejected, to be peevish and dissatisfied; and disposed, if not to blame, yet to despond under the afflictive Providences of God. But my *Text* teaches us, and it is the uniform Design of our holy Religion, to teach us a nobler Lesson; and exalt our Minds to a far happier, and more glorious State. *Not only so*, says the Apostle, *but we also Glory in Tribulation* — Not only I *Paul*, but *We Christians*, ALL of us, who have a just Notion of the Nature and Design of temporal Afflictions,

ons, and have *the Love of God shed abroad in our Hearts*. My Brethren, how wide a Difference is there, betwixt the real Frame and Sentiments of most Minds, in this Respect; and that which ought to be found in us: at least this is the Case with many, if not with all of us. So that here is great Reason for Improvement and Admonition. This same Apostle exhorts, *Let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ; stand fast in one Spirit, striving together for the Faith of the GOSPEL; in nothing terrified by your Adversaries; which is to you an evident Token of Salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given, in the Behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him; but also to suffer for his Sake.* Christians are here taught to look upon Sufferings, as their Glory. Though this may have a principal Reference to the *Persecutions*, which the first Christians met with for their Religion; yet the Reason is proportionably the same, where the *common Afflictions* of Life are productive of exemplary Virtue, and display the Power of true Piety and Religion. In short, what is there, but This, that is Matter of *Glory*, or redounds to a Man's real *Honour*. External Accomplishments,

Phil. i. 27.

SERMON  
XVII.

ments, and secular Grandeur, are of themselves, no just Matter of Glory; nor indeed any of those *private* and *easy* Virtues, which costs us little or nothing. *Thus saith the*

Jer. ix. 23. *Lord, let not the Wise Man glory in his Wisdom; neither let the Mighty Man glory in his Might; and let not the Rich Man glory in his Riches.* These Things are no just Matter of Glory; and should any Man be heard boasting of these Things, he would only appear vain and contemptible. See the Sentiments of the Author of my Text, and how ironically he treats such vain Boastings. See-

2 Cor. xi. 18. *ing many glory after the Flesh, I will glory also. Ver. 22. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the Seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they Ministers of Christ? I am more.* He adds, *But in speaking thus, if I did it seriously, I should speak as a Fool.* — Should I glory in these Things, as many do, I should only shew the Littleness and Vanity of my Mind. Accordingly he says elsewhere, he looked on these Things, but *as Loss and Dung*, compared to his virtuous Sufferings in the Cause of God. What then does he Account the chief Matter of Glory? Read on, Ver 23.

*In Labours more abundant — in Stripes above Measure — in Prisons more frequent — in Deaths oft — of the Jews five Times received I forty Stripes, save one — thrice was I beaten with Rods — once was I stoned — thrice I suffered Shipwreck — a Night and a Day have I been in the Deep — in Journeyings often — in Perils of Waters — in Perils of Robbers — in Perils of mine own Countrymen — by the Heathens — in the City — in the Wilderness — in the Sea — among false Brethren — in Weariness and Painfulness — in Watchings often — in Hunger and Thirst — in Fastings often — in Cold and Nakedness. — He adds, Ver. 30. If I must needs glory, I will glory of the Things which concern my Infirmities. He repeats it again in the next Chapter, Ver. 5. Of myself I will not glory, but in mine Infirmities. Adding, Ver. 7. Lest I should be exalted above Measure, through the Abundance of Revelations granted to me, there was given to me a Thorn in the Flesh; for this Thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; but instead of removing it, he said, My Grace is sufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my Infirmities,*

D d

that



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*that the Power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take Pleasure in Infirmities ; in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses, for Christ Sake ; for when I am weak, then am I strong.* — When encompassed with external or bodily Weaknesses, then I experience internal and spiritual Strength. My Brethren, tell me, do you think, that either you or I should ever arrive at any Thing truly noble and excellent, if we were exempted from all Hardships ? ‘ But my Afflictions, are so many, you will perhaps say, and of so disagreeable a Kind ; and my Sorrows so bitter and so great — my Life is rendered so burthensome and useless — I have lost such dear and valuable Friends — These Afflictions and Sorrows are too heavy and too great — Nor can I see the Fitness or Use of them.’ O Man ! Thou little knows what is best for thee ; nor what thou needest in Order to the complete Purity and Perfection of thy Nature. But be assured, thy Afflictions are not *unfit* ; nor are they *too many*, nor *too great* ; for this one plain Reason, because the God of Providence, the All-wise God, thy Heavenly Father, sees fit to exercise thee with them.

This



This *one Consideration* fully proves, and clears the Point. When ! O when, shall we be wise and dutiful enough to leave the World and Ourselves, to the Providence and Government of God ! We find even Father *Jacob*, with all his *Aged Wisdom* and *Piety*, crying out, *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not ; all these Things are against me ;* but a little Time convinced him of the contrary ; that they were all working together for his good.

READ the History, and consider the Examples of the most renowned Saints ; and say, if they did not meet with the heaviest Afflictions — and were made perfect through Sufferings. *These are they that came out of great Tribulations. Take, my Brethren, the Prophets for an Example of suffering Afflictions, and of Patience — Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the Patience of Job, and have seen the End of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender Mercy. My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Trials — knowing, that the trying of your Faith worketh Patience ; but let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. These light Afflictions, which are but for a*

James v.  
10.

Chap. i. 2.

*Moment, work out a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory; and will be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ.*

LASTLY, Consider how necessary it is, that *some Men* should be eminent Sufferers, in Order to display the Suffering Virtues, and shew forth the peculiar Power of Virtue and Piety. And if God call you or me, to this honourable Post, let us not be anxious, but endeavour to act our Part with Dignity and Advantage. The *Apostles* of Christ, Acts v. 41. *rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name.* ‘ When the Father of All, intends to raise up great and exemplary Characters for the Benefit of the World, he makes them to appear glorious by their Sufferings. Passing by therefore the Weak and Worthless, who would sink under the Weight of Adversity, and calling forth the noblest Souls, we may imagine him thus revealing to them the Intention of his Providence. ‘ I know, and love your sincere Righteousness; but it is requisite for the good of Mankind, which is not to you a Matter of Indifference, that They should know it too — nor can they know

‘ know it, unless they observe it tried with  
 ‘ Afflictions. I will therefore produce you  
 ‘ upon a Theatre, where in View of the  
 ‘ World, you shall conflict, some of you with  
 ‘ Poverty, and others with Pain, and others  
 ‘ with Death, in its most frightful Forms.  
 ‘ Come, and shew the Vigour of your Minds  
 ‘ — set before them Examples of an Integri-  
 ‘ ty, which they cannot but see — and which  
 ‘ they cannot see without Admiration: And  
 ‘ by a noble Sufferance, convince both your  
 ‘ own, and succeeding Ages, that *Virtue* —  
 ‘ compleat and genuine *Virtue* and *Piety*, is  
 ‘ quite invincible\*.’ Thus glorify God in the  
 Day of your Visitation, and the Glory shall re-  
 bound to your own immortal Happiness and  
 Honour. I have thus endeavoured to shew, in  
 the Application of this Subject, what Appre-  
 hensions good Christians should form of all  
 such afflictive Providences as are allotted to  
 them, and how our Hearts should be affect-  
 ed with them. Instead of being dismayed,  
 we should rather *glory in Tribulation*, and re-  
 joice that we are singled out, and counted  
 worthy to suffer in the Cause of God, and  
 in the Service of our Generation.

I SHALL

\* Mr. Holland's Sermons, Vol. I. Page 334.

SERMON  
XVII.Eph. iii.  
14.

I SHALL now conclude with the Apostle's fervent and affectionate Prayer for you all. *For this Cause I bow my Knees, unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named. That he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit, in the inner Man; that Christ may dwell in your Hearts by Faith: That ye, being rooted and grounded in Love, may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height; and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the Fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us, unto him be Glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without End. Amen.*

F I N I S.

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